

No More Hunger, No More Thirst
2 Samuel 11: 26 - 12: 13a, Ephesians 4: 1-16
John 6: 24-30

As your bulletin tells you, this is the season after Pentecost — no high holy days, just a great deal of scripture & some people get bored c it. Our scripture today was typical of the post-pentecost scripture David, how to be a X-tian, & Jesus, as the bread of life. The trouble with that is that that's the pattern of the scripture for a month & trying to weave those together more than once gets difficult. But there's more to that.

Let's start c stories. Why do we tell stories. Sometimes they are funny; sometimes they have a point we're trying to get across; sometimes they remind us of the traditions of our family.

Start c a story — A millionaire was giving a party & offered any —

thing he owed to anyone who would swim the length of his pool - the catch - the pool was full of sharks.

Splash. Into the pool goes a man swimming furiously. Fins are breaking the water line & jaws are snapping. Just when it looks like he's about to be fish food, the man chucks out "I'm a man of my word" says the millionaire & "you are the bravest man I have ever met. What can I give you?"

Flaring into the crowd, the swimmer says, "Let's start with the name of the jerk who pushed me in."

Brave. accident. While the Bible is full of stories of bravery, Nathan is my idea of a brave man. He knows David is capable of murder. He knows David will take what he wants - yet he steps & and confronts the king.

Someone once said of Nixon's administration "It was characterized by grand vision & petty grievance."

Nathan confronts the King & his grand vision & his petty behavior.

Nathan is aware that, as the Bible says, "The thing that David had done, displeased God." and so he tells David a story - a story of a man & a pet lamb & a greedy ~~king~~ rich man, who didn't want to diminish his own flocks & seized the pet lamb for dinner. David is incensed at the man - and then & uncommon bravery, confronts David by saying "you are that man." "You have harems & many wives - but you took Uriah's wife & killed Uriah. How do you account to God for that?"

Family story - I have a son named David. He had a wife & two little girls, one

of them newborn. He had an affair w a woman at work. They conceived a child. It would have been a boy, but she had an abortion to avoid the consequences of what he had done. It would have been a boy — his only boy — he has 4 girls. Sad & ironic. God is good at irony. This story of David hits home at my house. David & Bathsheba lost their first born son. King David had other children, by a variety of women, but this one would have been born of his love for Bathsheba, but it was not to be & died in infancy. Nathan's prophecy that David's household would be his undoing began to be true.

Did you ever try to get away w something? It just doesn't work. It just leads to lies & coverups & when it comes out it leads to broken relationships & bigger messes.

Nathan knew that - not because he was a prophet, but because he was a human being.

Paul's letter today starts out ~~to~~ so, then, I, a prisoner in the Lord, urge you to behave yourselves in a way that is worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Behave ~~in~~ ~~the~~ humility, gentleness, & patience. By today's standards those are three nice things but now are they rare. Suppose David had lived by them. Is it possible Uriah would have been killed in battle anyway, if David had been patient, maybe just maybe it would have worked out - but he was arrogant - not humble - certainly not gentle in sending Uriah off with the sealed instructions of his own death.

So we have the opposite of David - humility, gentleness & patience.

Paul was brave. He confronted the world of Rome with everything they were not - telling Christians to NOT be like the Romans.

Tapekophusune - Humility - was not well thought of in Jesus Day - slavish, ignoble, cowering, of no repute ~~and~~ were synonyms for it. And yet Jesus turns the idea around to become what Basil the Church Father called the "jewel box of all the virtues." We become humble when we truly know ourselves. We all know the expression "drunken queens." Christians were the opposite - once we face our failures, our weaknesses, our selfishness, our inabilities, our failed relationships - any arrogance we might have had flies out the window. Who am I compared to X? We all went through WWJD? and that was somewhat thought provoking but a better question is who

am I compared to Jesus.
Meekness - the ^NKJ says meekness -
in Greek prautes / praus.

It's the mean between two
virtues. I've said this before.
It's the person who's always
angry about the right things -
like injustice and never
angry about the wrong things -
personal insults. It means
having yourself under complete
control. How many of us let
things get out of control. A
recent survey said gay men
were as likely to be victims
of domestic violence as women
are. DV is a problem in
our homes, too. Tempers flare,
we say & do things that the X
in us would never do & we
hate ourselves after.

Patience - makrothumia - the
spirit that never gives in
& which because it endures
to the end will reap rewards.
But it has a more important
meaning - Patience = people.

Chrysostom said it was the power to take revenge but never does.

Put a very large dog & a puppy together. The large dog could annihilate the puppy & one bite - but bears the puppy's indignities & forbearing dignity. It is the quality that suffers unpleasant people & graciousness & fools & irritation. The N.T. & Paul often use it as a quality of God. God is patient & as we are works in progress & God is not there & us yet.

Finally there is love. In English we love hamburgers, our children, our spouses & God. In Greek those were all different words. Philia is warm affection for a friend, storge is family love, Eros is the love & involves sexual passion & finally there is agape - which is unconquerable

benevolence. Nothing ~~anyone~~^{people} can do will ever make us seek anything but ~~the~~ their highest good. Certainly a quality of God.

These are ~~these~~^{these} what Paul thought were the qualities of a Christian. Can you imagine the feeling in a Church when everybody has all those qualities. Unity & in diversity.

Finally, ^{there is} bread. Jesus says to the crowd "You're following me for the wrong reasons." I fed thousands of you & you want me to keep on doing it. But that's not what it's all about. Don't follow me because of what I can do for you. Follow me for what I am. I am the bread of life. Believe in me.

You see Christianity is not what you do - it's who you are. The Jews wanted to know what they had to do. They wanted a list of things to do.

People always want a list
of dos & don'ts. That's
easy religion. It's external.
Wear your hair so long, wear
your skirt (& it means women
must wear skirts) so long
& never show your arms.

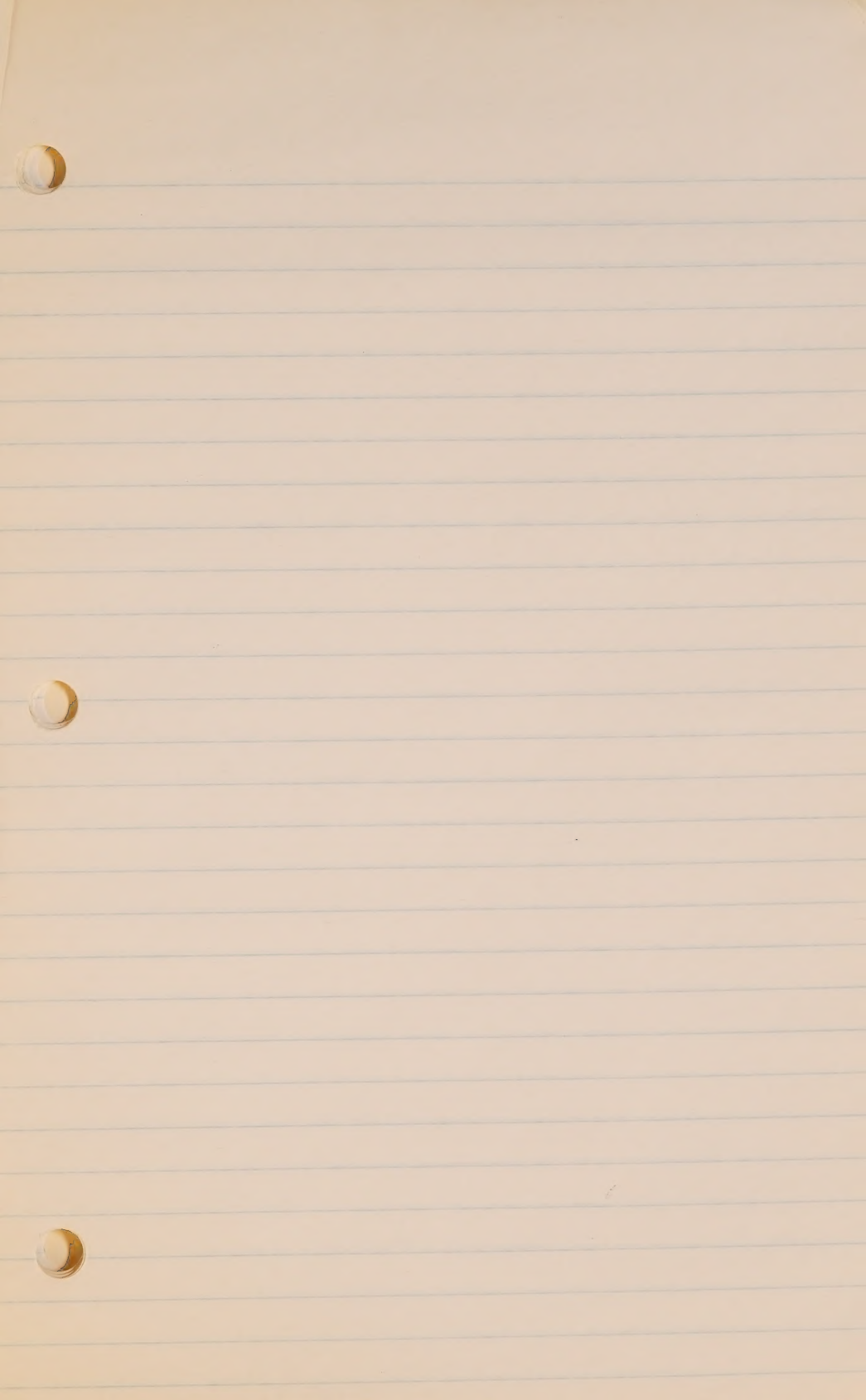
My parents had that kind of
religion - What must you
do? And Jesus said I
"have work for you" ~~Believe~~
"Believe in me". Why should
me, prove who you are.

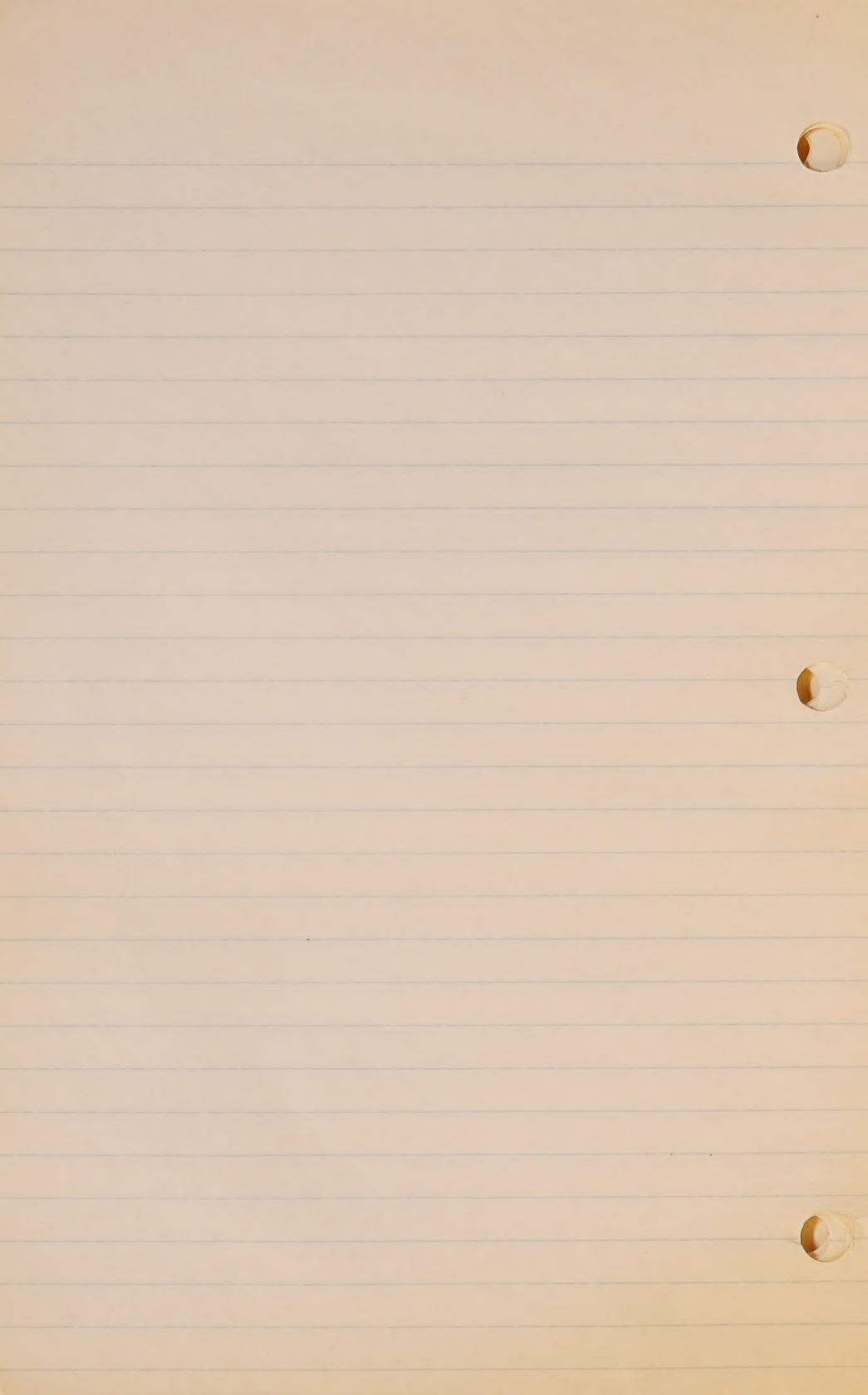
I just did & you still don't
believe. People are still
selling the message "Believe
in X for what he will do
for you." Money, success are
all signs of the X'tian. Not
so. The signs are the axes
paul laid out - humility,
gentleness, patience, love.
That's the coin you get paid
in. In China before WWII
I had an aunt who was
a missionary who talked
about "rice X'tians" they
came to the church because

they would get a ration of rice - but they never got what God really had to offer. You will get what the B of L is all about. You will be sustained inwardly no matter what is going on outwardly, you will always be loved - not as the world loves, but as God loves. & you will have peace. Because that's what Christ offers. It is not something you can take to the bank, but it's something you can bank on.

"I am the B of L," believe on me." It's so simple & people haven't begun to catch on to it. It's not what you have to do. It's all about who he is. It's not what you do. It's what he has done. ~~He~~ is the B of L - believe in him. & you will have humility, gentleness, patience, love, courage & peace. It can't get any better than that
Amen.

they would give a portion of
vice - but they never for
what has really had to offer.
"You must get into the T.B.P.
to all about. You will be
restored to membership as matter
what is going on afterwards,
You will always be found -
was as the name says, but
as the name & you will have
power. Because that is what
I think of. It is not
something you can take to
the bank, but its something
you can bank on.
"I am the B.P. believe
on my. It is a simple
to people haven't begun to
catch on to it. It's that
which you have to do. It's
all about who is. It's
not what you do. It's
what the law says. The
the B.P. - believe in this.
& you will have freedom,
justice, peace, power,
courage & power. It can't
be any better than that.





Gay + Bisexual Men -

apologize for Steve not being there.

Could have come Friday - not Thursday.

20th anniversary MCC.

Get a 25¢ of them -
Application for Stamp not being there.
Good time come Friday - not at all bad.
So it can be used 1960.

Williamson

Alabama does not provide AIDS
via Medicaid.

\$81,000. grant

(16) persons

Legislation -

Prem. Testing
Food handlers

"right to know" (Med. Comm.) (waiting Gov.)
signature

Legislative Commission

3.9% + HIV - 4,000 ms.

Partner testing & counseling.

Williamson

Williamson does not provide A-02
in Medical
\$22,000 grant
(10 persons)

Legislation -

9 pm. Voting
Lillian Goff
(prefer to know) (Wid. Comm.)
Legislative Commission
(waiting 200)
(waiting 200)

3.9% + 1/4 - 4,000 ms.

Further testing & counseling.

1st Men 24 — 68%

IV 2 — 72%

Hemophiliacs 40 — 79%

Prostitutes 1 — 75%

over 1% of black recruits 20-40
now infected.

1 1/2 million now infected.

48% infected will progress to AIDS.
up to 99% in 15 years.

1st IVDU now nearly 20%
Gay Men 63%

all ^{IV} 25%

10% 20-39 y.o.

2/3 men 3/4 women 1st

18% - 4%

last year

14% - 2%

1/1

11% - 4%

1940-1941

12% - 1%

1942-1943

even 1% of total revenue
was sufficient.

1 1/2 million more infected.

4% to 10% of population will progress to AIDS.
up to 10% in 12 years.

that 10% was nearly 80%
last year 1980

see the 80%

10% 1980-1981

of population 3/4 of women that

Bl-Hisp 19% pop. 58% AIDS.

Pedi

70% at risk parents

1/40 STD for HIV+

22/1000 all test sites.

HIV 7%

HIV IVDU 19%

Women

50% HIV contact

28% IVDU - HIV.

11 pedi cases - 92% IVDU mother

58% dead - all before 1985

1/2

28%

87

88

11-12-1980 19/10/80 3800 11-12-1980

10% or high parents

1/10 21/10 11/11

20/1000 are test notes

11/11 11/11 11/11 11/11 11/11 11/11

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Projections
200 1999

475 1991

1500-1700 cases projected.

Antiquarian
Book Shop

1991 2/11

1500-1700 Caranographes.

A. Martha Bart -

objection
Small - comp & other diseases
exposure - matter of choice.

Education -
Children + youth

Prevention of ignorance.

Efforts stymied by adults & prejudices.

Education has not made substantial progress.

7-12 gr. all schools.

12-18 y.o.
(too late!)
(10 y.o.'s have STD's)
(in Ala. 12 y.o. pregnant)

Useful res rested on teachers.

Most have praised, parents, students
have complimented.

Ala first statewide & spec. ed (first)

Should begin earlier - prejudice prevents
from some sectors. Before ^{set} patterns
are established.

Grant from CDC.

Mr. Martin -

active
2000 - 2005
- matter of choice

children + youth

Prevention of violence

Efforts to reduce by adults & professionals

Education for not making violent
programs

10-15% of

(too late)

17-19% - see below

(100% of 210)

(in 10% of 100)

Large number of teachers

that have been, parents, students
have been

the first attempt to offer

Shaped by the -
from the school
in the

from the

AIDS edue. for our-of-school youth.
Student/staff case policy.

Sonny Robinson - min.

Charles Collins - sub. abuse. BAD

Joseph Smith - Sr. Rsch Assoc.
Gay + pri's Men

Richard Keilung -
Hematologist
(M.D. from Tufts)

Dr. Kuperling - Maternal/Pediatric
Johns Hopkins, I.D.
Sergeantown. AIDS.

Kit. Educ. for our - 2nd school agents.

Students / off case for

Young Person - Min.

Teacher Salaries - 1st. School. 1890

Project Book - 1st. School. 1890
1st. School. 1890

Project Book - 1st. School. 1890
1st. School. 1890
(1st. School. 1890)

Project Book - 1st. School. 1890
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1st. School. 1890

Sunny Robinson -

Minorities - Race, culture, religion, sex.

16,400 cases N.Y. - Teenagers.

"Say No" fine, go after the ones who said "Yes".

Teens engage in oral/anal sex as a form of birth control.

Many come home to die. Particularly gay men - minorities.

1. Replace

hates - hugs

viciousness - vision

Suicide rate ++

James Robinson -

Ministries - Peace, Culture, Religion, Gov.

12,400 cases H.P. - Tennessee

"So, the fine, go after the over who
said 'No'."

Heads engaged in coal/mining
of first level.

Heads, come down to die. Politically
gov. men - ministers.

1. replace
father to buy

ministry - mission

British note ++

Charles Collins -

Advantages of gay community -

Gay cases falling - self-mobilization works.

HIV + IDU - growing - 1.5 million +

Drugs primary priority
unorganized
not altruistic

Drugs make criminals + prostitutes.

AIDS policy must interface = Drug policy.

Is drug treatment available - No.

" " must incorporate AIDS
" " educ.

must talk abt sexual behavior

Advocates for: (the angry)

Recovered/recovering

70% hl + hypoxic - must become angry.

Charles Bellina -
- community of pop community

pop career feeling - self-motivated works

1.2 million + - growing - 1.2 million +

three primary priority
- management
- not a threat to

three major elements & priorities

three major elements & priorities

to keep treatment and other - No.

" must incorporate HHS

where

must take all federal actions

(character for: the career)

Research/development

to be able to improve - must become engaged

Joseph Smith -
Gay Perspectives:

Joseph Smith - High Sch / Colleges
Lut - middle America

Reactions -

1. It could happen to me.
2. It won't happen.
3. It won't happen here.
4. I don't do that.

Experimental Behavior.

Media, advertising, parents. (Do as I say,
not as I do. Behind of morality.)
Uncensored, unprepared, mixed values.

Kids lie!

60% of women worry that guys lie
30% of guys do!

60% of guys lie 19. times

Kicking

Issues extend beyond med. problems.
Unprepared educ. ethic, socially, morally.

Icans at risk - High Sch/Colleges.
Sex + needle sharing

Realities -

1. It can't happen to me.
2. It won't happen.
3. It won't happen here.
4. I don't do that.

Experimental Behavior.

Media, advertising, parents. (Do as I say,
not as I do. School of morality.)
Uneducated, unprepared, mixed values.

Kids lie!

60% of women worry that guys lie.
30% of guys do!

80% admit boys 19. btw

Kiln

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Alcohol - conception when drunk

When drunk you'll have sex w people
you ordinary wouldn't even have
lunch with.

Low self-esteem:

Pressure cooker for risk.

1:17 Love on STD.

More have prevention device available.

Trill - greater ~~than~~ in H.S. / greater for
out-of-school youth.

Steroids now greatest drug of risk
for transmission.

Information is not education, does
not change behavior.

Let them educate themselves
Sex happens, some gay, some use
drugs, some use steroids.

bleeding - covering with bandage

When bleeding stops, wash with soap & water
then apply antibiotic ointment & cover with
bandage.

don't get wet

Pressure (cover for 10 min)

1:1 (over on 2D)

have been present since available

100 - greater than 45 / greater for
one of - about 100

there's been a great deal of work
for the members

information is not education, but
the change behavior

how then educate the members
by the way, some say, some use
books, some use articles

Just say no or die!

Explicit programs, accurate.
"Body Fluids" doesn't get it.

"Children are giving their lives so
adults will not be embarrassed."

Buies power in women; this moment
is not more important than her
future.

Good AIDS programs are controversial.

Useless programs are not controversial.

Work on building block of self-esteem.
Is important to tackle this risk now.

Values: GPA not intrinsic value.

Different is not not as good.

Double messages about women.

Double message to gays.

Just say so or die!

explicit program, accurate.
"Red, White & Blue" doesn't put it.

"Children are giving their lives to
adults will not be embarrassed."

Force power in women; the movement
is not more important than the
future.

Good HHS programs are controversial.

When programs are not controversial.

Look on building block of self-esteem.
As important to that this first step.

Value: CPA not return value.

Different in not just as good.

Good message about women.

Good message to girls.

Justice: - Women - Infants

Quilt - 4,000 panels.

Women's issues not discussed at H.V.
9% women 1 1/2% inf + children.

Indigent - W & H not model parents
Black families.

Parents often die before children
develop disease. Have their own
problems.

Individual case cases - 25% already in
family.

50% STB's women

Disease will ultimately
predominate in women.

Rwanda 1/3 mothers infected

NYC 2 1/2% Atlanta 1:150

Denver 5%

San Francisco 2%

fracture:

Swift - 4,000 pounds.

Keyserling - Women + Infants

Lack of advocacy.

Women's issues not directed at HIV.
90% women 1 1/2% inf + children.

Indigent - IV du not model parents
Chaotic families.

Parents often die before children
develop disease. Have their own
problems.

Indigent care crisis - 25% already in
poverty.

50% STB's women.

Disease will ultimately
predominate in women.

Ruanda 1/3 mothers infected

NYC 2 1/2% Atlanta 1:150

Newark 5%

Miami 3%

Depression - women & infants

Class of advocacy

Women's issues not discussed at H.V.
10% women 1 1/2% inf & children

Budget - 1/4 of total parents
last 6 families

Parents often die before children
develop disease, then their own
problems

Infants can survive - 50% of children
infants

50% of 10% women

Problems will not matter
problems in women

Parents 1/3 of total infants
HVC 2 1/2% infants 1:150

Women 3%
Men 3%

Risks -

If prior baby has AIDS

If mother has been ill a
long time.

If immune system is particularly
damaged.

John -

If your baby has the

of water has been all a

long time.

If there is any
dizziness.

What advantages can it, not has.

1. Category 1. Psychopaths.

2. Category 2: Economic disadvantaged

Medicaid waivers

Frustration ✓

Dr. Bart ✓

Church - gay group
Coffee houses } H.S. age

Clinical Specialist

(in commitment)
Sexually active infected?

Quarantine - 2.3^{1B pts} who need
to be quarantined for cure?
How would gay community
like the community at lg.
to deal w these persons?

Denial of mental illness, denial
of AIDS.

Young gays? Falling through
cracks? Chld abuse?

- Community-based orgs. willing
to do education?
- Behavior change - not knowledge.
- Hospice - different kind of belief?

(in community)

personally active in the community?

Proactive - 3-5% who are

to be government for care
How involved are community
like the community is
to deal with the situation

Kind of mental illness, clinical
of the

young people? falling through
the cracks? What about?

Community-based care
to be education?

Behavior change - not knowledge

different kind of help?

thinking about

Moses' Covenant

Exodus 20: 1-17, 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25

John 2: 13-22

10 Things you need:

1. Toothpick - To remind you to pick out the good qualities in others.
2. Rubber band - To remind you to remain flexible; things might not always go the way you want but they will work out.
3. Band-Aid - Remind you to heal hurt feelings - your own or someone else's.
4. Pencil - To remind you to list your blessings every day.
5. Eraser - To remind you everyone makes mistakes & its okay.
6. Chewing gum - To remind you to stick to it - you can accomplish anything.
7. Mint - To remind you, you are worth a mint in God's eyes.
8. Candy Kiss - To remind you that everyone needs a hug or a kiss every day.
9. Tea bag - To remind you to relax daily & go over your list of blessings.

10. Sugar Packet - People respond better to sweet talk than anger.

A professor of clinical psychology in a small liberal arts college our guest suggested "Maybe the Ten Commandments ought to be called something else. They ought to be called the 10 hardest things we try to do in life - honoring our parents, dealing w/ adultery, attempting to get off the treadmill one day a week & not feeling jealous about what other people have.

The trouble is Judge Moore has given the 10 Commandments a bad name. I think God gave them to us for an ideal to live up to - not a stone tablet to shove down anyone's throat. The difficulty is fundamentalists - ours & theirs - is they don't leave room for individual thought. It's my way or the highway.

The 10 commandments are taken out of a much longer passage which takes the form of an ancient international treaty.

"If you will do so + so, I will do so + so." A treaty between a more powerful nation + a weaker nation - which makes sense if you think about our relation to God. I am not as powerful as God - I need God's protection + might, because mine is not sufficient.

The things the 10 commandments lay out are common to all great religions; Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism - I think I've probably said here that they were written to teach people how to live in community. They are designed to protect + provide, rather than be moral absolutes which shackle people in arbitrary burdens. While the commandments are voiced in the negative - there are two positive reasons for each commandment: God wants to protect us from any unnecessary harm +

God wants to provide us with a rich + meaningful life.

The 10 commandments have two dimensions - vertical + horizontal. The first four deal with the vertical relationship between us + God - the last six deal with our horizontal relationship between each other. Jesus knew that.

A Pharisee asked him which was the greatest commandment. He said "You shall love the Lord your God with heart, mind + soul - This is the first + greatest commandment. The second is like it "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." on these two commandments hang all the law + the prophets.

Law is not enough. The difficulty is that that's what everyone seems to think religion is all about is a set of rules - Do this, don't do that. The rules are there just to help us.

They remind me of a story I heard about a playground.

A group of supposedly educated
+ forward thinking people decided
that the fence around a playground
was limiting the children's freedom
of activity + imagination + took
the fence down. The kids responded
by playing only in the center of
the playground. It was where they
felt safest. When the adults
restored the fence the children
reclaimed the whole playground
right out to the fence. People
need boundaries. They develop
better + faster if they know the
true distance they can go.

And That's what the whole Bible
is — a definition of the boundaries —
where we leave off + God begins.

A little girl was being tucked in
for the night. Her mom kissed her
+ told her to have sweet dreams.
She turned off the light + was about
to leave when the little girl asked
her to stay. Her mom reassured
her that she was all right + told
her she'd leave the door cracked
+ the hall light on.

But the little girl still insisted on her mom staying. "Honey, everything is fine. You are not alone, God is here $\bar{c}$ you." & the little girl replied "Yeah, but I thought I need God $\bar{c}$ skin on."

10 rules for life were not enough. All of humanity needs God $\bar{c}$ skin on. That's what Jesus is.

We've been talking about the three great themes of Leut - the Covenants, the Journey & repentance.

The idea of the journey is all thru the Bible. The Patriarch's journey - Today $\bar{c}$ Moses journey thru the wilderness & the giving of the law - but also Jesus journey & maybe a little of Paul's journey.

Think about Paul for a moment. He was preaching & starting a church in Ephesus. Corinth was a center of learning & philosophy. It was famous

for its temples to many gods.
Among the largest was the temple
to Aphrodite the goddess of love;
where 1000 male + female prostitutes
served their clients as part of their
worship ceremonies. Money + exotic
goods flowed thru the trade routes.
It was wealthy + materialistic.
To the Corinthians learning, money
+ physical pleasure were the
reasons for living.

Imagine how they responded
when a new religion appeared
no temple prostitutes, no learned
scholars holding debates in the
court-yard, no magical incantations
that would bring you wealth + power.
This new church accepted rich + poor,
men + women, slaves + free, educated
+ uneducated - all on an equal basis.
It's followers didn't value money or
material possessions - they even
shared their wealth equally. They
didn't exact the body or the mind -
they talked about the spirit of God
living in each human being.

And who was their God. All
all-powerful spirit who chose to
reside in a body.

Not the body of a king or a warrior.
The body of a carpenter. And once
this God put on skin what did
he ~~become~~ ^{he do} - Did he establish a
powerful empire. No. He allowed
himself to be arrested, tortured &
executed like a common criminal.
Not an ordinary death but the
most shameful kind - the kind
reserved for the lowest criminals.
Then hear Paul:

For the Jews demand signs &
the Greeks desire wisdom, but
we ~~seek~~ proclaim & crucified,
a stumbling block to the Jews &
foolishness to the Gentiles, but
to those who are called, both
Jews & Greeks, Christ is the power
of God & the wisdom of God. For
God's foolishness is ^{wiser} ~~stronger~~ ^{God's weakness is}
than human wisdom & stronger
than human strength.

A God is slain on, who loved
us enough to die for us.

And a God who could become
angry.

Imagine yourself as a

poor palestinian peasant & you
want to go to the temple to
worship. The temple courtyard
was where the sacrifices were
offered. You had little to offer,
but you could provide a dove
or a pigeon. Outside the temple
you could buy a bird for 4¢.
But it would ^{not} pass the inspectors
looking for blemishes - they'd find
one. Inside the court of the
gentile you would have to spend
7¢ for an almost identical bird.
The rich would feed lambs & goats,
sheep, cows, beehives - all in the
temple courtyard open to the non-jew
gentiles. It was as far as they
could go. Try to find a quiet
place to pray among the bells & cows
lambs & ~~sheep~~ ^{goats}, pigeons & doves all
bellowing, baa-ing, & cooing. All
the hawkers shouting their wares,
& the money changers offering
to change your larger coins or
foreign coins into coins of
Jewish origin acceptable in the
temple. ^{Forbidden.} Hard to pray in those
surroundings. And our God

and all
as
extraneous
prizes.

ē skin an strode in and drove the whole lot out - drove the animals out ē a whip, overturned the money chamber's tables.

The law was good - but Jesus was seeing that life under the law was more of a burden than a blessing. It was destroying not helping. Jesus could see that people had become so invested in life under the law that the purchase of temple donations & sacrifice items were more important than simply worshipping God. Too many were so obsessed ē luxurious trinkets to show their righteousness they forgot to honor God's temple as a holy place, a place of worship & fellowship.

We're not so different today. How much do you think it cost for a block of granite ē the 10 Commandments carved on it - to be placed in the courthouse in Montgomery - by people

who are supposed to hand out justice but one of our community had to petition the courts for a change of judge because she would not get a fair trial under the ^{man, who would become} chief justice.

We are surrounded by the trappings of religion — but pressed to find a quiet place to pray.

Jesus came to proclaim a new law — not a destruction of the old but a fulfillment of it. Destroy this temple & in 3 days I will raise it up. Not the temple at Jerusalem, not the temple of the 10 commandments, not the temple of religious rules & regulations. But the temple of the body of our God in skin & bone. They couldn't understand. Not the disciples, not the Jews, not the Greeks. Jesus' body was destroyed so that believers might put to rest guilty hearts, resist temptations to power and judgment

overcome frustrations at not being good enough. Jesus body was raised up so that believers might know the joy of life in X, the excitement of following God, the abundance of hearts full of love and a peace that passes all understanding.

that's what it's all about. the law is not a shackle but a bond of love. It shows us the joy of a pure heart. People tried to achieve it by animal sacrifice or huge financial gifts. But hearts can't be coerced - they have to be given freely & graciously - which is what Jesus teaches.

That's the new covenant. For those who don't know Jesus, this is the message most needed. God is waiting to shower ^{that} love & freedom that gives us a heart to love one another & God abundantly. For those who know X, the much-needed message is that a pure heart is assured & that God's love is & is no matter what. Amen.

If I Am Ryted Up...

Numbers 21:4-9, Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

Two men were leaning against the office water cooler. One says to the other "Say, you look awfully depressed. What are you thinking about?"

"My future," his friend replied.

"What makes your future look so hopeless?" the first man asked.

"My past." he replied.

I don't think there is a person alive - at least one who's mentally healthy - who doesn't have some regrets about the past. Paul is quite right when he says "None is perfect - no not one."

Regret is a crippling emotion because it leaves us chained to the past. Regret provides ammunition for the twin demons of shame & guilt. It erodes our self esteem. It's the little voice that whispers

In our ears "Remember your failures, remember your ~~foolish~~ foolish decisions. Remember the kind of person you were." Unfortunately, it also forgets to say - "hey, you were so."

Can you imagine the feelings of Moses' group - on the road. However long they were out there - and it certainly felt like 40 years - grumbling. Nothing is worse than grumbling. Churches grumble a lot. I remember at a

Church I pastored: It was a troubled church to begin with.

when I was first there. It had been a church of about 92 - and no one had told me its attendance had fallen to 14.

They didn't invite me to preach when I candidated, because "Everyone has heard you preach & we know you can."

Rebuilding is hard work. You have to convince people that things are different than what made them go away -

and many people never come back once they go away. I built it up to 35 in 18 months. And the 14 in power grumbled all the way. They grumbled when there were 30 in church; they grumbled because the budget wasn't being met & owed me 4000 dollars; they regretted not being the church they once were and forgot they'd had 5 years of really poor preaching.

the journey of faith - which is really what the journey out of Egypt is all about - is sometimes arduous. God's timeline is never our timeline. We get tired of God's snails pace. God usually is not a racehorse - and if God were - we'd complain we couldn't keep up. We complain that nothing is happening, and forget to ask God for guidance. We get bored easily. Thomas taught us that everything gets solved in an hour. We're like the little kids, who when you're

Spent hours in the kitchen
look at their plates + say "I
don't like this stuff." The
Hebrew's didn't like Manna +
Quail + remembered the stew
of Egypt. Church people tend
to say - "well the mega cathedral
has 5000 people - surely we
could have 500." We get in the
pits + can't dig ourselves out
and we're a whole lot more
ready to look down +
grumble about the mud than
look up + ask guidance of
our Maker.

do you believe God would
really send snakes among them?
Does God behave like that? I
don't think so. I think they
found themselves in a place
infested w snakes + remembered
their grumbling + felt they
deserved to be punished +
figured God felt they should be
too.

So God healed them by
~~raising~~ ^{raising} them make a pole + a

snake around it. Do you know what that is today? It's the universal sign for a physician. Aesculapius insignia. God sent them healers - who knew what to do for snakebite - but they story through the years got to be the sign of the physician - not the physician himself or herself. Stories do that. "If you left up the brass serpent - you will be healed."

Christ says - "If I am lifted up - you will be healed." "If I am lifted up I will draw all people unto me." "Unless I am lifted up, there is no salvation." And of course, Jesus was talking about the cross.

Many of you know that I love the writings of a man named Raymond Brown. Brown was until he died recently - the greatest authority on the book of John. John is addressed - Brown says - to a very mixed community -

It is addressed to believers, to Jews, to Samaritans - and to something he calls "the world."

The world was made up of all those who did not believe in him. The doubting Jews, the Romans, the people who had thrown the Christians out of the synagogues - everyone who hated this little band of Christians. And then he turns around and says "God so loved the world - those who hated Jesus - so much that that was exactly why he sent Jesus, so that those who did believe in Jesus would be saved."

Brown says the world was made up of believers & doubters, half-hearted but scared wanted to ~~believe~~ believe but were afraid of being thrown out of the Jewish community - and scared of persecution by the Romans." And in the middle of it all John says "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but ~~to~~

but in order that the world might be saved by him." The exciting thing about John's Gospel is that it doesn't depend on us - it's all depends on God.

The great news of the Christian covenant is God's refusal to give up on the world. That's what Grace is all about. The scripture readings today teach us that God has ultimately decided that there is only one rule ~~for~~ in the covenant - humanity - that God must obey the Law of Love. ~~This~~ Today's lesson reminds us that God's light is mightier than any darkness we may find ourselves in - even the darkness of regret. God's grace covers our past - our present + our future. God's love is more powerful than any death - even the horrible death on a cross.

Christianity was never meant to be a religion of abstinence and deprivation. It was

exactly the opposite. It was
a ^{contradiction} ~~contradiction~~ for just such
kind of religion. Religion - after
the coming of Protestantism got
twisted. If you're having a
good time you are not religious.

People in Catholicism began
beating themselves - literally.
Protestants began listening to
4 hour sermons + hit each
other on the head if they dozed
off. Anytime you were
having fun - you were
sinning. We tried to drive
pleasure out of our lives -
and there are still churches
that do this - and still
preachers who preach it. But
Christ came to give us
abundant life. Joy -

If we could keep the
innocence we had as children,
the ideals we had as teens,
and the will to achieve we
had at 20, life would be
wonderful. We would
also have missed love and
companionship, fun +

knowledge - we'd have missed some mistakes - but they are what gave us character.

So what do we do in our past? With our fears + ~~the~~ foolish decisions, with ~~our~~ the accusing voices in our head. Grumbling + regretting aren't going to change them. "God, who is great in mercy - out of the great love in which he loved us - tho' we were dead in trespasses, made us alive in Christ, by grace you have been saved - and raises us up in him + seated us in the heavenly places in ~~the~~ Christ Jesus so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

You + I - the world - are given the abundant life. Stop grumbling + regretting. God loves you. God is not trying

to hurt you - God is trying to love you to wholeness. You don't have to live a life of deprivation + abstinence to be a Christian - most of us have everything we need or want - we don't have to give it all up.

"For ^{by} grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works so that no one may boast."

Here's where Lent comes in "For we are what ^{God} has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand to be our way of life."

The good we do doesn't save us - but it is what we were saved for. The last word for us on this 4th Sunday of Lent seems summed up this way:

Stop gambling & regretting —
the Cross has already taken care
of us. God loves you, Jesus died
for you. Now lift Jesus up &
get to work changing the world.

We do any good we do — not
because we have to to buy
God's love — because it's
the only way we have to
show our thanks for what
He did for us.

Can you let God put it all behind
you. Can you start the day in
joy? Can you accept that the
world is peopled by sinners
saved by God's grace? We
were not made to live in the
past chained by regrets. We were
made for abundant life of
friendship in God & to be of
help to humanity. Let's start
living like God loves us.
Amen.

I am who I am by the
Grace of God
Acts 10: 34-43, I Corinthians 15: 1-11
John 20: 1-18

A woman tells about her 6yo.
grandson Joshua who attended a
Church Vacation Bible Study whose
theme was "What Would Jesus Do."
To remind the children of the theme
they ^{were} given little bracelets that had
WWJD printed on them.

One evening, Joshua's mother
asked him to change his clothes
and said "WWJD - what would
Jesus do?" His mother replied
that she thought Jesus would do
what his mother asked + change
his clothes.

Joshua thought for a moment
and remarked "I don't know,
he seems to be wearing the
same clothes in every picture
I see of him!"

Isn't it strange that it's
the same about Crucifixes - almost
everyone of them has the same
dying figure of Christ. There
is one I love though - It

Christ on the cross but
triumphant - his arms raised
& almost laughing at the
cross.

I don't know how you feel
about Easter, whether you
believe Christ really was raised,
but I know this - The early
Church certainly believed it.

Peter who just two days before
had denied ~~him~~ knowing him -
Peter certainly believed ~~he~~ was
raised. Paul - little, twisted Paul -
who had persecuted the church -
believed it. The church believed
it enough that hundreds of
thousands were willing to die
to show they believed it. And all
of that within 20-30 years of his
death.

Were they all deluded - are we?

I love the 15th Chapter of 1st
Corinthians. I grew up on the
great creeds of the church & one
of these, of course, was the apostle
creed. Paul didn't have that

Creed, but it was written in answer to a debate Christians were having about the resurrection of the body. Now, I believe in the resurrection of the body. Jokingly, I tell Shirley I don't want to be cremated, but buried, because I don't want God looking for the scraps. What Paul said was, "if you didn't believe in the resurrection of the body - you couldn't believe in X's resurrection and it therefore emptied the Christian message of its truth + the Christian life of its reality. As Christians - we are a resurrection people. Many of us are a walking testimony that the belief that Jesus returned from the dead has changed our lives. There is great power in the belief in the resurrection. Scared people become powerful people.

I'm an O.T. Christian. I go along with the idea of "sheol" rather than, the more graphic "hell" of revelations. Sheol was a shadowy, grey place where the dead went. The early

Christians believed that was where
Jesus was from Fri - Sun.
There was Gloom - in a grey land
~~below the earth~~, beneath the world,
without strength, without light, cut
off - & the dead - without
humanity or God. It was a
total end to life, until late
in the writing of the O.T. - Job -
who says "Still I know One ^{God} to
champion me at least, to
stand up for me upon earth
The body may break up, but
even then my life shall have a
sight of God."

Late in the O.T. hope emerged
after centuries of being ravaged by
army after army and defeat after
defeat the hope of redressing the
balance began to appear.

Another thing happened. The idea
of the individual appeared. Before
that it was always the clan, the
tribe, the nation. Now God
became not only the God of the
nation but the god of the individual
person. Not only our God - but
my God. And once a relationship
between God and man had been created, even

death could not destroy that relationship.

The Greeks, on the other hand, had a dread fear of death. For them, death was the great unknown. They believed in the immortality of the soul - but felt the body would be dissolved. The Stoics - to whom we owe much of our belief about eternity felt that God was a great divine fire and when we were born a spark of that fire came + dwell in us - when we died the elements of earth, water returned to the earth + the water + the divine spark returned to God. They could not imagine the resurrection of the body. The body was too corrupt to come back - but the soul was pure + would go to be in God.

To Paul - It was all different. We - humans - were total - not divided body + soul were one. The body wasn't evil - Jesus - the very child of God had taken on a body + I we

did not have a contemptible body because it was inhabited by God. The life after death would ~~the~~ involve the whole human being - body & soul.

Paul insisted that the body we would have after death would be a spiritual body. What he meant was our personalities would survive.

But how do we express our personalities - in our bodies. Hands, smiles, turns - pushes - pulls. What Paul meant was that ~~the~~ after death the individual remains. We will still be ourselves - we will survive as a person. And so would Jesus.

That's prelude to this: "I handed on to you that which I also received, that X died for our sins, according to the Scripture, that he was laid in a tomb, and that he was raised up on the third day - and he was seen

by Cephas - Peter - by the 12 -
(the disciples), seen by more
than 500 - most of whom are
still alive - although some have
fallen asleep - Seen by James
and finally by me. - Paul - the
abortion (truly what the Greek
means) of the apostolic family.
I am the least of the apostles
- not fit to be an apostle -
because I persecuted the
church - But by the grace of
God - I AM who I AM. "
I am a child of God by the
grace of God. I am a child
of God by the action of the
Cross - but not only the
cross but by the resurrection.

The Individual. There are some
things you have to do by yourself.
No one can do them for you. Birth -
no one can be born for you - breathe,
eat, sleep & death - you have
to do it for yourself. Your family
& friends can't. Death is very
solitary. Imagine being one
of the women coming to the
tomb. Alone, each of them

with their thoughts - Mary
maggdalene, James' mother,
Salome - each walking to the
tomb & a basket of spices.
What must they have been
thinking. Dead nearly 3 days -
smells - the corruption of the
body - the dearness of their
friend - the act of the next of
kin. Spong says Mary Mag.
was acting as the next of kin -
the wife's position. John
says he called her by name.

Don't you wish God would
call you by name. Each of
us - the one who has just lost
someone to death. The person who
is in prison. The person in
the closet. The person who is
terminally ill. The orphan
left alone. The Thomas who
doubts alone. The person who
dies alone - God calls us by
name.

The gay poet Riecke - observed
that love, which is difficult,
is beyond the young. They are
beginners at everything & have

to learn to love. "With their whole being, with all their forces gathered about, ~~them~~ close about their tired beating hearts, they have to learn to love."

Life's like that. We have to learn to live.

The message of easter is that God calls us by name. That there is hope after death, that there is no ending.

Mark has no ending. Does that seem strange

Paul has certainty, John has certainty — but mark just ends. Could it be because Paul knew because his life had been changed? Could John have the certainty because he constantly heard Lazarus speaking and telling how his life had been changed. But Mark was too young. He had not begun to live as yet, love and was not sure how his life had been changed.

It is individual - It has to happen to each of us - we have to believe on our own - but primarily we have to believe because it has happened to us. To me. The individual.

I don't think the resurrection had any meaning for me until I went through a resurrection in my own life. I think the scholars don't understand it because they have not had a resurrection in their own life. When you have it is not unfinished it is not questioned. It is certain. I offer you

this Easter the proposition - Let God change your life. It is not unfinished. There is hope. There is a chance for a new beginning. I have you can.

Amen.

A preacher's natural resistance to the unfinishedness of Mark is increased on Easter. It is hard enough to resist the temptation of trying to raise the dead. It is hard enough to try to hold your own with the lilies of the field and chancel that proclaim so clearly, "Christ is risen!" Surely, the high drama of the Gospel of Mark is more suitable for an Easter text. Why publicly struggle with a gospel that has no sense of an ending? Pronounce "It is finished" and let us all depart in peace.

But what if this refusal to satisfy our all-American hunger for a happy ending *is* the gospel truth? What if history is more of a mystery of transfiguration than anyone can write, preach, or sing? What if we, like Mark's disciples, have followed so long and so wrongly? We come to the tomb every Easter, ready to decorate with eggs and anthems, expecting to find the risen Christ at home. Instead of the expected Host, there is an angelic intruder with the disturbing news that Jesus of Nazareth is not here and is not coming back.

He is not here. What an un-Easter message. It makes me nervous in the same way that a single sentence of Yeats makes me nervous. "Pull up your chair to the edge of the chasm, and I will fill you a story." This Gospel has no safe telling, no firm ending. It threatens us and our need for protection. It draws us to the edge of our projections. He is not here.

But Christ is not here if here means what we expect. He is not in the place where we laid him. Christ is not here, if here only means there and then. "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you" (v. 7). Galilee. Where is Galilee? Where (or is it when) can we find Galilee on this unfinished map in this never-ending story? Can we get there from here? Mark draws us to the edge of the chasm between our ways and God's ways. This far and no further. An angel bars our way.

We cannot go around. We have to go back. We cannot go around. We have to go on. Like the ancient church, we circle back to the beginning. "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We read it again. We start at the beginning. "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news'" (Mark 1:14-15). We go

HEATHER MURRAY-ELKINS

woman, with a face that matched her sack. But mile after mile she enchanted us with stories of the road, stories of adventure. She understood the lure of the horizon.

We rose one morning to find her gone. She left no explanation. But years later, after we were grown, a card arrived after Easter. She was somewhere. On Easter, she had remembered us, and straightening her clothes, had gone to find a church. An usher had stopped her at the door. She wished us well. Perhaps she would meet us on the road sometime.

Unfinished business. I look for her each Easter. I hope we will let her in, but my guess is she will be waiting. Waiting somewhere on the road. Waiting with the one named Jesus. Waiting for us to find our voice and head for the horizon. Enough said. This is the gospel of the Son of the Blessed One. It has no proper end.

Suggestions for Worship

Call to Worship (Ps. 118:14-24):

LEADER: The LORD is my strength and my song;

PEOPLE: He has become my salvation.

LEADER: The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!

PEOPLE: I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

LEADER: This is the day the LORD has made;

PEOPLE: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Act of Praise: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24.

Suggested Hymns: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"; "Up from the Grave He Arose"; "The Day of Resurrection."

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, you have shown your great power in the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. You

Double into Faith

Acts 4: 32-35, 1 John 1:1-2:2
John 20: 19-31

A car was involved in an accident. A large crowd gathered. A newspaper reporter, anxious to get his story, could not get near the car. Being ~~a~~ ~~an~~ clever sart, he started shouting loudly, "let me through, let me through - I'm the victim's son." When he said that, the crowd made room for him. Imagine the reporter's embarrassment when he discovered that lying in front of the car was the victim - a donkey -

In the middle ages, when various biblical Characters were portrayed as various animals, Thomas was shown as a donkey - to symbolize his foolishness. At times we can all be a little stubborn in our faith walk & growth. There's some Thomas in all of us, even the greats.

One of the great old biblical

preachers was a man named George Mathewson. Our church in Providence met a Mathewson memorial church. Mathewson wrote the famous hymn - "O Love that will not let me go". When he first started pastoring, Mathewson had a crisis of faith. He had doubts. Finally, deciding to be true to his conscience - he decided to resign from his church & leave the ministry. But his church would not let him go. They told him to stay & preach as much about Christ as he believed in. So he stayed.

Gradually, as he served that people and their church, he was able to deal with his doubts & to grow beyond them. He discovered something important: the answer to doubt was not some convincing argument, but life with God's people, doing God's work. Eventually it was faith - not doubt which had the final say in his life until he could write the words to a beautiful hymn:

O, Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

When I was taking courses at Harvard, in Boston, I took a class with Harvey Cox, who wrote The Secular City. Cox made a point ~~th~~ I have experienced myself - there's a point in your teens + 20's when the faith of your childhood is not enough & you may even fall away from the church. But then there comes a point when you find that life without faith isn't enough & you begin looking for something or needing something and you begin to grow the faith of your adult years - taking in the experiences while you were out of the church & using them to add to, modify or strengthen your adult faith.

Seminary sometimes is a difficult place for younger - just out of college students - because many are going thru a period of conflict between doubt & faith. Carl Rogers, the famous psychologist, was 22 when he entered Union Seminary in N.Y. He was in a seminar organized to explore religious doubts.

Rogers later said of the group: "the majority of the members ... in thinking their way thru questions they had raised, thought themselves right out of religious work." He was one. He might have become a minister rather than an internationally known psychologist - but he listened to his doubts rather than to his faith. At 22, it's normal to have doubts - but he didn't know that then.

Thru the years, Thomas has gotten a bad rap. I think it's unfair. I've always felt a kinship w/ Thomas. After all, when Mary Magdalene came back,

having seen the risen savior,
all the disciples, except Thomas,
gathered together behind a locked
door, full of fear + trembling. They
didn't throw a party or declare a
celebration to proclaim Mary's story.
They doubted, were afraid + hid.
For many of us - they idea that
we could be openly gay + trans
filled us w/ doubt as well, and we
doubted, hid + were filled w/ fear.

then Jesus appeared, showed them
his hands + side, repeated his
message of peace to them +
breathed the HS on them.
Apparently, their fears + doubts
were laid to rest because they
told Thomas they had seen the
risen Jesus.

Thomas's statement that he would
need the evidence of his own senses
does not seem unreasonable to us.
after all - how many of us have
met someone who's been
buried for 3 days + come back
from the dead. Reasonable

Skepticism is a sign of intelligence!
Truth verified objectively - in a lot
or scientific verification is more
easily believed. Of course, we're
able to understand Thomas.

I've been writing a friend
who grew ~~up~~ up in Unitarian Science
& belongs to Unité now & believes
in reincarnation. I don't &
in one of my letters I pointed
out that we each only had the
word of witnesses. We had not
experienced it. I don't mean to
belittle the experience for those
who believe, but my dog must have
been a college professor.

Crises of faith are not uncommon
among us when the world no
longer makes sense and we
cry out "Where are you, God?" -
the times when we outgrow our
childhood faith & must figure out
for ourselves what is true. Maybe
Thomas was wondering "What
am I going to do in the rest of my
life when my plans are in

ruins at my feet. I can respect that. How many of us had things we wanted to ~~do~~ or be when the realization that they would be difficult for a gay person sank in.

But think about it. Trusting in God would not allow a finance committee to build a church ~~of~~ on a "field of dreams" faith - "if you build it they will come". We can't just trust God for our future - we need to make some kind of retirement plans. Fortunately for us, Jesus didn't condemn Thomas; he just reached out to them in his crisis and said "Peace be c̄ you."

Rediscovering faith requires another road for those who don't have the benefit of a physical appearance by the post-Easter Jesus. We need another way to make sense of life amid the confusion or ruins of our faith. Marcus Borg, who's a member of the Jesus Seminar, discusses

the post-Easter Jesus as real, living power in a different form from the living, historical Jesus. This power enabled the early Christians to live out their faith.

Look at the difference in today's scripture. John describes the little band immediately after the resurrection. Acts describes them 20 years later. The band of dynamic evangelists of Acts bears little resemblance to the fearful group behind a locked door in Luke's story.

Christianity does not demand that we check our brains at the door. I am a Christian today because a Christian attorney presented me with a faith that made sense. I cannot be the kind of Christian who says "The Bible says it, I believe it & that ends it." We do, however, need to use our minds to see that there are more possibilities than can be empirically proved. Albert Einstein once said

~~"Live all your life"~~ There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle - the other is as if everything is a miracle. Einstein - a great mathematician believed everything was a miracle - and we, too, can contemplate the possibility of things beyond our understanding without giving up our intellectual integrity.

"Peace be $\bar{c}$ you" are wonderful words. We're not talking about the absence of conflict - Jesus saw the Romans on every corner - Jesus is talking about peace in the midst of conflict. Remember the Methodist Church near here torn apart by a tornado & the pastor losing her 4 yo. And the congregation wrapping around her at that moment. This is a peace that enables us to go about the task of loving the world to wholeness even in the midst of war, even in a world that denies all we believe, & for the disciples - even under threat of death.

Once we believe & have the peace
of Jesus we have work to do.

Belief itself is not the objective.
The post-Easter Jesus was concerned
about the transmission of justice
& love even after he was out of the
immediate picture. "As God has
sent me, so send I you." We
are expected to do the things
Jesus did - wait a minute!

Yes - he replies - and the empowering
breath of the Spirit is given.

Talk about faith! God has entrusted
the message to a group of very
unreliable witnesses - us.

Faith - real faith - shatters fear -
but you know, it also shatters peace.
as we thought we knew it in the
world. We need Jesus' peace
because the other kind is gone
forever. Every thing we watch or
read, we read & watch thinking
about the message & what
nuances of selfishness and evil
does it portray. Its more simple
shedness at work & considering
if ~~it~~ the action will witness to

the light we serve. We just can't spend our money for what we want because we know God will ask an accounting of our stewardship - no longer hiding among the culture around us, but being a light in the community's darkness. Faith demands not just a decision but an action - a commitment to be part of God's plan to change the world.

A 4 yo girl was asked what God's love meant to her, and she said, "Knowing that God loves me is like walking in a rainbow -- and I have to share it, because it's not my rainbow." Thomas, longing for a new vision, would have agreed.

Jesus has shown us just enough of himself to empower us on our journey. Just when you're ready to quit - remember you're walking in a rainbow - and share it. Amen.

the first time I saw him. In fact, I can't
recall any more for that the way
because we have had such
an experience of our relationship -
the longer I think, among the western
countries, but being a little in
the community's business. But
I think it was just a coincidence
but an action - a commitment
to the fact of that place to change
the world.

It is a great knowledge which
that's how much to keep out
the world, knowing that for
there are in the world in
a position - and I have to
change it, because it is not
my business. Although, looking
for a new vision, I would like
to see the world in a new way
I have the vision that enough
of myself to improve the
our future. I am not a person
ready to quit - I am not a person
looking for a new world - and
I think it is a great thing.

backing through water
Acts 3:12-19, 1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36B-48

Billy Ray & Joe Tom, two fellows from Tennessee, were still new to flying. But they decided to rent a plane & fly from Knoxville to Asheville, N.C. As they crossed over the Smokey Mts., they discovered there was a problem - one of the engines, & they ~~decided~~ decided they needed to notify the Asheville airport that they might need to land in a hurry.

Billy Ray nervously grabbed the mike & said "Thanks giving, Thanksgiving! New Years, New years! Easter, Easter!"

"You're getting there, Billy Ray," said Joe Tom, "Stop when you get to May Day! May Day!"

Well, May Day was a couple of days ago, but this is the first Sunday in May. May Day in many parts of the world is celebrated as "Labor Day" honoring workers, but some countries have some interesting customs

for this time of year. Did you know, for example, that while we are in church today that young men & women in Austria are running thru the mountains of that country carrying torches. They do this every year on the second Sunday of Easter. It's called the race of the four mountains. They begin at a mass on top of Magdalensberg mountain. Then, carrying burning torches, they go over the mountains to Saint Lorenz. The race takes 24 hours. At the ~~end~~ end a priest is waiting to bless them. I can't help but think if it were any of us running the priest would be waiting to give us last rites. We're told that sections of this race are so treacherous that the runners dare not look back. Some people in that part of Austria are said to believe that to stop this ritual pilgrimage would be a sign of the end of the world.

Our texts for the Third Sunday
of Easter are not about the end
of the world. No one's crying

"May Day! May Day!" - although the
scripture says the disciples
were frightened. -- but it
was a different kind of fear.
A man had returned from
the dead. His friends & followers
didn't know what to think.
This had never happened before.
When people are dead, they are
supposed to stay there -- and yet
this man was living - breathing.
The disciples were terrified & thought
they were seeing a ghost.

They say the events of 9-11
changed the world. Not as
deeply as the resurrection of
Jesus changed the world.

Jesus says, "Why are you
frightened? And why do you
doubt in your hearts? Look at
my hands & feet; see that it is
myself. Touch me & see, for a
ghost does not have flesh &
bones as you see I have.

Like add something

interesting "The disciples dis-
believed for joy." They felt it was
"too good to be true."

During Lent, a friend of mine
at Seminary, participated in a
spiritual formation group. Everyone
agreed to fast from two things.
Her two were sugar of any kind
and anxiety. She says she
did better than expected & the
sugar but she could not fast
from anxiety for six weeks.
She continued to feel anxious
about her own life, her grades,
her family, & her future. She
continued to feel anxious about
the world situation, abuse of
children, the racial problems
in her own neighborhood.

I know a lot about anxiety.
I had lots of it in my 20's.
So much so that I wound up
seeing a psychiatrist, was on
anti-anxiety medication &
still having panic attacks

I was afraid ! Fear was running & ruining my life. I was unable to function normally because of fear.

all around us are people whose lives are being ruled by fear. things like: This relationship isn't working but I'm afraid to get out of it because I may not make another one. I'm afraid of what I'm going to find out when I go to the doctor. I'm afraid of old age & having no one to care for me. I'm afraid of sickness & pain. But always, I'm afraid of death.

Did you ever think about every one at Easter being afraid? Easter took them all by surprise. The women came & spices to anoint his body & prepare him for burial. They wonder who will roll the stone away. They come expecting to find a dead man & are frightened

when they find the stone rolled away. They sweep in grief while Jesus is standing just behind them. They weren't ready for Easter. Mary is afraid the body had been stolen. She assumes the worst, not the best. Who would assume something that's too good to be true? She goes back & wakes Simon Peter & the Beloved Disciple. People ^{who the ~~SP~~ was?} wonder, John Mark?, Lazarus? Lazarus is Raymond Brown's guess. But he could have been any one of them. Brown says "He's one who has become very sensitive to Jesus thru love." John's gospel says that the Beloved Disciple is the first to put two + two together. He's the first to believe Jesus ~~has~~ risen. But he doesn't share it w/ anyone.

Peter runs into the tomb & sees the grave clothes, but doesn't understand - which is John's typical way of describing Peter. In John, Peter never

understands. As a matter of
fact, the IC never understand.

Fear has made all of them
dense & unready to understand
the joy & possibilities waiting
for us. Peter is afraid, because
he has denied Jesus & afraid
of retribution. The Beloved
Disciple is afraid it is too
good to be true. Mary is
afraid someone has stolen
Jesus, & he's standing right
behind her.

Then ^{the} Easter ^{moment} happens! Easter
happens when we are most
afraid.

It's the ~~second~~ ^{third} Sunday of Easter,
but I picked up a bunch of
Easter Candy at 75% off because
my favorite drug store has been
celebrating Mother's day since
Easter afternoon & getting
ready for June graduation.

It's Easter - and we're still

living in fear - nothing
much has changed for us -

What would change for you
if you had nothing to fear?
Not failure, or poverty, or pain
or loss of people you love or
declining health or mental ability
or anything else imaginable
including death? Think of the

kind of person you would be
if fear was completely
removed from your life. That's
really what Easter is all about.

Easter says to us that all creation
is in God's hands. Even the
ultimate ^{death} ~~ending~~ has been trampled

~~reproach~~ under foot by the power of our
almighty God. You don't have to
fear aging, the end of a relationship,
the loss of a loved one, the loss
of your home or source of
income. No matter what
experience may come your
way, what if you just knew
that every thing would work
out for your best good? That
would make things different
wouldn't it?

That's the message of Easter.

Why are you frightened? Why did you doubt? "Look at my hands & feet; see that it's myself."

Most of us are Christians. We've been Christians a long time. We've invested our time, our money, many years of our lives in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But many of us have not taken out of our faith the one thing every follower of Christ has a right to — that is the life-changing joy of knowing nothing in the world, nothing in the universe, nothing in all creation can defeat you if God is $\bar{c}$ you. All these years there's been nagging fear & doubt where there could have been joy.

If we believe what we say we believe — that Jesus was raised from the dead. That because of this we have nothing to fear — not our past, not our present, not our future — how can we go from this place & live the same tepid lives we've

lived. We don't want to believe it - we "disbelieve for joy". It's too good to be true. But it is true. And it changed the disciples lives. Once they were frightened, stubborn, difficult people. When they realized that there was nothing to fear - they found in the risen χ the courage to live as strong, confident people.

If you had nothing to fear - and in χ you do not have anything to fear. How can that change your life. Stop disbelieving - it isn't too good to be true. It is true. From this moment on, there is nothing to fear. Go from here $\bar{c}$ stronger, with confidence, $\bar{c}$ the power of the risen χ $\bar{c}$ in you. Go out and change your life ~~amen~~ amen.

Acts 4:5-12, Psalm 23, 1 John 3:16-24
John 10:11-18

Halfway between Easter + Pentecost every year we find ourselves at "Good Shepherd" Sunday. Once, a long time ago*, I wrote a sermon for women pastors, reminding them that "little Bo Peep was a shepherd, too,"* back when pastors were assumed always to be men.

Sheep are not very smart — and the sheep/shepherd image is one I hate for the local church. I've always said I hate the image of a bunch of sheep tagging behind me. It's an unhealthy image for the church. All of us, ^{the} sheep, clergy + laity alike; and we are all called to follow the Good Shepherd who has laid down his life for us.

Back to real sheep. One person who grew up on a sheep farm, believes that sheep aren't really as dumb as they've been pictured

It's false advertising on the part of the cattle ranchers. Cattle ranchers move their herd from the back to horses + whips. (Now there's an image for the church!) Sheep, on the other hand are led from the front, following their shepherd. Different, but not dumb.

Not only that, but sheep know their shepherd. In a Nat'l Geographic article from several years ago, the writer tells about the Ribari people in India who are sheepherders. At night, shepherds + flocks gather in one place, + shepherds take turns sharing night watch duties.

The morning then is time to withdraw to each flock's pasture. Each shepherd has slightly different calls, variations on a theme. There are morning calls to move out, calls to bring the sheep to water, and so on. The ~~each~~ shepherd knows their own sheep, + the sheep know their shepherd and a particular

flock will disentangle itself from the larger flock & move out behind him in the morning. This may or may not seem astonishing until we realize that often 5000 sheep are gathered together ^{at} ~~for~~ one nighttime flock.

Although many voices are calling, sheep will follow only their shepherd. Sheep know their shepherd. Jesus said "I know my own & my own know me."

And shepherds know their sheep. For each shepherd, a sheep is a who - not a what. The shepherd is so intimately familiar with his own sheep that he will know who is present & who is still missing - and this in the face of a thousand sheep - all looking - to us who don't know sheep - pretty much alike.

In the Gospel text, Jesus says "I am the good shepherd" not the hired hand who runs away at the first sign of danger.

"I know my own + my own know me" implies a kind of intimate relationship in which each ~~part~~ knows the other deeply.

Today is mother's day. Think about when you were a little child. Maybe you got separated from mom in a big store & then you heard your mother's voice - It was different from every one else's voice. You knew her & she knew you. Just as you were comforted by hearing that familiar voice, we know & desire to hear the voice of our shepherd. As we feel completely at ease w/ our best friends, so we can feel protected by our Good Shepherd. It's reassuring to know that not only if but when we are lost we have One who will search for us, if only we are attentive to his call.

The trouble with us is we seem to have trouble following the shepherd. Even when we know the shepherd, and know that the shepherd only wants

good for us, wants to care for us,
wants to protect us, wants only
our well-being - we wander off.
We are so easily distracted by
louder voices and enticing
activities that we ignore the
voice of the Shepherd. We have
Sheep Attention Deficit Disorder.

funny
story

In 1141, the German town of
Weinsberg was under siege. An
invading army had defeated
the town. The ruler of Weinsberg
sent all his people a message
that they would be surrendering
soon. The conquering army would
allow all the women & children
in Weinsberg safe passage out of
the village. The women sent
back a message asking that
each be allowed to take her
most valued possession - her.
Duke Frederick of Swabia
agreed to their terms. The next
morning every woman in
Weinsberg lined up prepared to
leave the village and in each
woman's arms was her most

cherished possession, her husband. The emperor was so touched that he ended the war between Wernsberg & Swabia.

Love is a powerful force, and a radical force. Jesus is the shepherd who lays down his life - not because it is his job - but because he cares for ~~them~~^{us}. Now, we can understand the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep because his family & his livelihood depend on those sheep. If wolves attack, he would combat the wolves because that's his job. He knew the risks when he signed on. It's sweet in the territory. But that was not what Jesus was saying. Jesus says he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep because he cares for ^{that much} them. He values the lives of the sheep more than he values life itself.

Of course, Jesus is not talking about sheep. He's talking about us. He cared so much for us he gave up life itself for us.

Then John has Jesus say something very important. "The reason God loves me is that I lay down my life that I might take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my free will. I have full authority to lay it down & I have full authority to take it up again." Jesus was ~~not~~ ^{like} a victim. He was not ^{like} some animal dragged unwillingly & without understanding to the sacrifice. Jesus lay down his life because he chose to do so — and the reason he chose to do so was us.

How can we repay that kind of love?
~~How do we respond to that kind of love?~~ ^{the letter} 1 John ~~of~~ tells us how: It's so pitifully simple, but we forget the impact of it: "When you see another in need & you have enough to give to him of what you have, ^{that} is to follow X. To shut your heart & to refuse to give is to show that the love of God which was in Jesus X has no place in you."

I have a final word from today's scripture that always gives me peace & comfort. For anyone who's ~~is~~ wondering how one can be a gay & trans: Hear these words: Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we can come confidently to God & receive from him whatever we ask because we keep his commandments & do the things that are pleasing to him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of Jesus & we should love one another - and the one who keeps his commandment abides & ~~him~~ Christ & Christ in him -"

The sheep know the shepherd, the shepherd knows the sheep. The cross tells how much we matter to God, and when we help another we are saying "we love God." ^{+ thank you Jesus}

It's all very simple when you put it in terms of sheep & shepherds. They are not so stupid. Let's hope that in our lives, nothing will drown out the voice of the shepherd calling us to follow

him - & in the simplest way
possible show our love for him
by loving our neighbor.
Amen.

The Journey is Our Home
Acts 10: 44-48, 1 John 5: 1-6, John 15: 9-17

There's a charming book called
Dear God: Children's Letters to God.
One youngster wrote: Dear Jesus,
I want to thank you for going up
there on the cross for us every
Good Friday. You must be real
happy when the weekend is over.
Thanks, Anita.

Today is our first day worshipping
in our new space. I don't know
about you but many people hate
change & lose the comfortable &
secure feeling that stability gives
them and hate going anywhere
new, doing anything new &
hate being asked to change any-
thing about their lives. Others
could care less if they wake
up in a new place every day,
started something new every
week or even had a new lover
every month. I just can't do
that any more. I'm so
forgetful - I'd never remember
her name. Let you think it's

similarity creeping up, Mussy
says "Mom, ~~they're never~~
you're so forgetful, they'll
never know when a hymn is
set in. I'm not any more
forgetful now than I was
at 19.

On this first day in our new
church space, I want to talk
about the nature of the church.

We all come from different
backgrounds. I was talking
to Nancy about choosing hymns
and she said "Pick ones we
all know." Well, I sat up all
one night reading hymnals
old ones, new ones, evangelical
ones, liberal ones, Catholic
ones. The problem is that
we all grew up in different
churches & each denomination
sings different hymns, the
ones I know and have
sung all my life aren't the
ones you know. And because
I grew up in not only another

denomination but another part of the country, I'm not sure I always know ~~the~~ which ones you know. So we're gonna put a box out, & if you want a particular hymn sung - you put it in the box & I guarantee that somewhere in a service within the next month or so, if I can find the hymn & the music we'll sing it. But, because there are new hymns being written - and the church can become antiquated & irrelevant, we'll also learn a new hymn or new words to an old tune every once in a while.

Back to the Church, ^{but} ^{friends of each other} ^{Friends of God.} have to start out as friends. Jesus said "I no longer call you slaves, because the slave doesn't know what the master is doing, but I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I heard from my father. You haven't chosen me

but I chase you, and I
appointed you to go out and
bear fruit, of such a kind
that it will remain.

Friends - what will friends do
for each other. Steven Ambrose
puts it this way "Friendships
are different from all other
relationships. Unlike acquaintain-
ships, friendships are based on
love. Unlike lovers + couples, it
is free of jealousy. Unlike
parents + children, it is free
of criticism or resentment. Friendship
has no status in law. Business
partnerships are based on contract;
so is marriage. Parents are bound
by the law, but friendships are
freely entered into, freely given,
freely exercised. A little like
being a gay couple, isn't it?
Having a friend + being a friend
is something very special.

Being a church member is very
special. It's being a friend to
everyone in the congregation,
but also being a friend of God's.

of one

First of all we're friends "who would lay down his life for his friends. Most of us wouldn't lay down our lives for each other would we?"

Suppose you are part of a couple & the question of vacation comes up. You want to go to the beach but your partner wants to go to the mountains. You go to the mountains. Well, you're codependent. I don't think so. It's just what you do when you love someone.

Suppose you're out shopping for needed replacements of kid's clothes. You buy the best name brands you can afford. Your pants, on the other hand have holes in the knees. It's just what you do as a parent.

You want to go to college - believe this one, but the college is in another state. You move to let the other person pursue their dream. It's what you do - because you love someone.

There's a story, true one, about a Franciscan priest Maximilian Kolbe. He had been sheltering Jews and was condemned to Auschwitz in 1941. In July of that year there was an escape. It was customary to kill 10 Jews for every one who got away. The Nazis denied the 10 food & water until they died.

The commandant lined the prisoners up & randomly called names. One of the prisoners stumbled forward to fulfill this monstrous quota. His name was Gadjonick. He cried "my wife, my children" as they were being led away. There was movement among the prisoners. Guards raised their rifles. A prisoner was leaving the lineup & pushing his way to the front. It was Father Kolbe, no fear, no hesitancy. "I wish to speak to the Commandant. I wish to take the prisoner's place. ~~He~~ He pointed to Gadjonick. I have ~~some~~ ^{my} wife

no children, I am old & ^{not} good for
anything." "Request granted."

Father Kaebe outlived the other
nine. He had to be killed by
lethal injection on 8/14/41.

We are asked for so little as
church members, Come, make
a contribution - give a little
money, mark a letter, support
the church by your presence,
your letters & your time. And
we balk - we think of it as rules,
& church membership as a
contract. It's not. It's an act
of love.

I guess Jesus was glad when
the weekend was over, but the
Cross was necessary for Jesus
to show his love for us.

Church membership is our way
of saying Thank you for a
friend who was loving enough
to lay down his life for his friends.

Back in the days ~~when~~ before the civil rights movement a man named Clarence Jordan founded a multi racial Christian community in Georgia. He is the author of the Cotton Patch Hymns. He is also the founder of Habitat for Humanity. Jordan was once asked to preach at the dedication of a church built by one of his seminary classmates. He arrived at the church & his friend, very proud of himself & his congregation showed him the building. The comfortable seating, the beautiful windows, the great education space. He showed him outside to the illuminated steeple on top of the building. The cross & the steeple cost \$15,000.

Jordan looked at his friend & said "I think you all were cheated."

His friend didn't expect to hear that. "What?"

Jordan said, "I think you all were cheated, because, you know, it used to be a ~~thin~~

Could get a cross for free!"

We're not asked for a lot. We're asked to get out of our comfort zone, to give as we are able, to serve the church & those who need our help, & to give a little time.

It's a new step for us. Our means of saying "thank you" to one who has done so much for us are simple enough. Let's keep it in perspective. It's the least we can do for a friend.

Amen

Trinity Sunday, Father's Day
Peace & Justice

~~Trinity Sunday~~ Burn Twice
~~Trinity Sunday~~ often falls on Mother's
Day, but I don't really remember
the last time it fell on Father's Day.
But today's scripture is fitting for
both Father's Day & Trinity Sunday.

"For all of us who are led by the
spirit of God are children of God.
For you did not receive a spirit of
slavery to fall back into fear, but
you have received a spirit of
adoption. When we cry "Abba"
it is that very Spirit bearing
witness in our spirit that we are
children of God, then if children,
then heirs, heirs of God & joint heirs
with Christ -- if, in fact, we suffer with
him so that we may be glorified
with him."

It's the good news of Christianity —
we are children of God. Let's face
it — the concept of the Trinity may
be a little abstract for us —
God as parent, God as Son, God as H.S.

I've quoted Liz Higgs before.
She's a Christian humor writer. But
she had a conversation with her
daughter, Lillian about religion
and she asked, "Who rules
the universe?"

Without hesitation Lillian answered "God does". Next, Liz asked about Jesus, + Lillian answered "they work together." Time for the big one, "What about the H.S.?" Liz asked and Lillian replied, "Oh, He works on weekends."

Lillian obviously did not ~~truly~~ have a clear concept of the ~~H.S.~~ But who does? If we could reduce God to a fat formula God would not be God. But we know what it means to be children of God.

Tenny story for father's day:
Two explorers met on the slopes of Kilimanjaro. They compared stories. "I am a man of action," said the first fellow. "Modern life was too stuffy + predictable for me. I wanted to experience new horizons, danger, adventure. I wanted to see nature in the raw. That's why I came out here. What about you?" "I came," said the second man, "because my box is

taking saxophone lessons."

Most of us know the traditional "explanations" of the trinity.

Ice, water, steam - one element in these forms. St Patrick's shamrock - three ~~leaves~~ ^{separations}, one leaf. An apple - skin, pulp, seeds - yet it's one apple.

God holds it all together, Jesus is the meat of our faith, & the HS is the seeds we spread.

It's all a little too simplistic - Trying to capture the might & power of something as awesome as God in something as mundane as an apple. When I went to seminary, my history of X^{ian} thought professor - one of us - by the way, - used the Greek word Homo-ousion - one substance - to show how the early church tried to explain God. The Creator, the X, & the HS are Homousious - of a single substance.

Can anyone tell me what substance God is? It's not

that simple. Scripture tells us about what God does & there are moving descriptions of God's presence in scripture.

Proverbs describes God as having a helper at creation - and that helper is explained as the HS - Sophia or Ruach - both as females so maybe Liz Higgs daughter should have said "she works on weekends" In Genesis 18 Abraham welcomes three strangers & knows that he has been c God. In the Gospels the disciples are commissioned to go into all the world, baptizing them in the name of ^{the} Father, the Son & the HS. & In Paul's epistles he blesses us c "the grace of Lord JC, the love of God, & the communion of the HS." God comes to us as a loving, active community.

I don't know if you can ever explain the inexplicable. The Trinity is the tell of a story - the story of God's community & our church

community and our own
relationship $\bar{c}$ that God community.
Stories surprise us $\bar{c}$ the truth;
they invite us to participate,
but when you try to explain
a story, you just delute it.
God/Christ/H5 is something
you experience. Just as Isaiah
experienced the presence of God.
Awesome, maybe even fearful,
certainly overpowering — but how
do you explain Isaiah's experience?
You can only tell the story.

Reading the account of Isaiah's
encounter $\bar{c}$ God reminds us that
we are all called by God. For
Isaiah that call $\bar{c}$ the reality of
God's presence was awesome.
The building shook on its foundations
and was filled $\bar{c}$ smoke. The
disciples experienced the presence
of the H5 — like rushing wind &
tongues of fire — but Elijah
heard ~~the~~ God, not in an
earthquake, wind or fire, but in
the still small voice. The
disciples heard Jesus in a
simple command. "Follow me".

Christianity is an experience

* You can keep all the rules,
and never know God. The
trouble is that lots of people
do all they know of religion.

not a list of do's + don't's,
despite Paul. *

Among the texts for today - beside
Isaiah + Paul - there is the
story of Nicodemus' experience. ✕
A man comes to Jesus by night
and asks questions and receives
cryptic answers. "What must I
do to receive eternal life?"

Eventually, John says, it comes
down to this - "you must believe
in JC." It means that we
must believe that God is who
JC declared God to be. Believing
that God loves us, cares for us
+ wants nothing more than to
forgive us. It is so hard for
humans not to think of God
as a judge waiting to exact
penalty or as a task master
setting impossible standards.
But Jesus told us of a God who
is loving as a loving parent is
loving, who wants nothing
more than for erring children
to come back home. It cost
the life + death of Jesus to tell

people that - but we cannot
begin to be X'tians until we
believe that in our whole hearts.

We must believe that Jesus + God
are homoousion - of one substance
just as parent + child share
genetic makeup. Jesus is God.
The him was the mind of God. He
knew God so well, was so close to
God, was so one in God that he
could tell the absolute truth
about him.

We must take Jesus at his word.
When he tells us we must cast
ourselves unreservedly on the
~~mercy~~ mercy of God we must do
so. Christianity - true
Christianity - has three elements
we must believe - God is a
loving parent, Jesus is the
child / son of God and tells us the
truth about God, + we must
be obedient to the commands
of Jesus. And that's where
we lack. Obedience in today's
"me first" world does not come
easily.

And John goes on "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Everybody's gospel. A text so loved that people from China & Japan can quote it - the backwoods of America & the cities of Africa. A text that has captured the world's imagination.

That's the text that tells us it all starts in God. God does not have to be pacified, God does not have to be persuaded to forgive. It isn't that God is stern & unfair giving & Jesus is gentle & loving. They are one & the same. It all started in God who loved us and sent Jesus to tell us so.

We think of God - many of us - & I'm afraid we see it being eaten out on the world

stage - as looking at humanity in their heedlessness & rebellion and saying "I'll discipline them & punish them & scourge them until they come back." It's too easy to think of God seeking the allegiance of humanity in order to satisfy a desire for power and subjecting the universe to that power. But that's not God. God does not act for God's own sake, but for ours. Not for a desire for power, not to bring the universe to heel, not to reduce the world to abject obedience. God is the parent who cannot be happy until all God's wandering children have come home. God does not smash us unto submission; God yearns over us & woo us unto love.

God loves us - It's the world God loves. Not one nation, not the good people, not just the people who love God, - it's the unlovable

and the unlovely, the lovely
who have no one else close
to them. The person who loves
God + the person who never
thinks of God. Those who rest
in the love of God + those who
spurn that love — all are
included in the vast love of
God.

Augustine put it this way:
"God loves each of us as if there
were only one of us to love."

And then we have Isaiah:
"Whom shall I send + who will
go for us?" And we think
"Me?" I'm going to serve this
awesome God? And we remember
that Isaiah was cleansed in a
burning coal so he no longer
needed to feel unworthy in God's
holy presence, and we remember
that we are loved by a God who
cleanses us by Jesus' sacrifice
& brought us into communion
with God, X + the H.S.

God is in us. God is for us. God
is our parent who loves us beyond
measure, who sent our brother

to give his life for us & our
giver of gifts who stays in us,
sustains us & enables us. How
can we continue loading
that love. How can there be
any other response than to
enter into community in that
love we call the Trinity &
invite others to come in us
into that love.

I cannot explain the Trinity
but I can tell you what the
Trinity does. God, X & HS LOVE!
Enter into that love today &
bring others in you.
Amen.

to give his life for us & our
gifts of gifts in return & our
love to us & ourselves. How
can we continue loving
that love. How can there be
any other response than to
enter into communion & that
love we call the Trinity &
enter into it to come to us
into that love.

and cannot explain the Trinity
but I can tell you what the
Trinity does. God, X & H.S. LOVE.
Enter into that love today &
when shall you be able to
having others & God.
I'm going to come to
awesome. And we remember
the Trinity was changed to a
burning coal as it was
made to feel unworthy in God's
body presence, and we remember
that we are loved by a God who
dies for us by Jesus' sacrifice
& through his communion
God, X & H.S.
How is it? How is it? God
to our present and future and beyond
eternity, make us one together.

What's Rocking Your Boat?

A.P.H. nurse, writes of giving immunization shot to preschoolers. One patient refused to let her administer the shot. She stared at the needle & yelled "No, No, No."

Her mother was not much help, all she said was "that's not polite behavior."

So the little one began yelling "No, Thanks, No Thanks, No Thanks."

Life is not easy. We try to trust God & our problems, but sometimes the problems mount up. And we want to cry, "No, No, No." But that's not a way to behave around God, so we cry out "No Thanks, No Thanks, No Thanks."

We all know the story of Jesus & the disciples are getting in a boat. A giant windstorm comes up & the boat is about to be swamped.

or

David is a shepherd boy and his brother's army is losing and David volunteers to take on a giant warrior.

Actually the stories aren't so different. The setting is different, the characters are different, but the theme is about the same. A small person / persons & a huge opponent. A giant warrior & a giant sea. A small boy & a small boat.

"Jesus/God, don't you care that we are perishing?"

Who hasn't asked the question at some point in their lives. Doesn't God care that I've been diagnosed w/ a malignant tumor? Doesn't God care that I - my lover - my child is on drugs & powerless over them? Doesn't God care that I work hard day after day & I fall farther & farther behind? Is God asleep? Doesn't God care?

A little girl & her mother stood in line in front of the gas chambers at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during WWII.

The little girl did not understand the fate that awaited her, but she could see the agony on the faces of those around her. She tugged on her mother's sleeve & said "Mama, it's dark in there. I have been a good girl. Why do we have to go in there?"

I've been a good girl! Why was she & all these people being hurt - Where is God? Our little boat is being swamped - the giant is going to get us. The storm clouds gather. We are on the verge of surrender. "Teacher, asked the disciples, "Don't you care that we are perishing?"

Sometimes we find ourselves in the middle of a storm. Sometimes we find ourselves facing great odds. Very few people go thru life untouched by some kind of tragedy. Two of my friends have lost teenagers due to car accidents. I lost count a long time ago of the young men I buried due

to Acts. I cannot enumerate the bedsides I have sat by, and I nearly died myself a year ago. All things we don't think we can handle by ourselves.

Most of the time we're Superman or laundress woman. But the wind starts blowing & the giant starts taunting. The boat starts rocking & Superman turns into Clark Kent & we hope there's a phone booth handy. What do we do? We're Christians - we've been taught - programmed - what to do. We turn to God. When we are inadequate to face life's pressures we are comforted by the idea God is with us. But sometimes it just ~~go~~ doesn't work. Sometimes we experience a chilling silence. And like the disciples in the story who found their master sleeping during their distress, we wonder Is God Asleep?

An unknown poet wrote this about relationships - but it is apropos

of our relationship $\bar{c}$ God:

Sticks + stones are laid on Boxes,
Aimed $\bar{c}$ an angry art.

Words can sting like anything,
But silence breaks the heart.

More relationships end ~~of~~ our
arguments that end $\bar{c}$ silence
than with words. If you're
yelling you're still alive. When
there's silence. It's all over.

Silence breaks the heart. Especially
when it is God's silence. Can it
be that God is speaking even in
the silence? Could it be necessary
for Jesus to sleep so that the
disciples would be confronted $\bar{c}$
the inadequacy of their faith?

In fear the disciples ask Jesus
"Teacher, don't you care that
we are perishing?" And what
happened next? Jesus woke up
& rebuked the wind. He said
to the ~~wind~~ ^{sea} "Peace. Be still!"
Then the wind ceased & there

was a dead calm and Jesus said, "Why were you afraid? Didn't you know I was in the boat with you. Where is your faith?"

The problem isn't always the storm outside. Sometimes the real storm is the fear within - fear that could have been dispelled if they had come to grips with their doubts.

The storms rage, we cry out. At this point it seems like God is asleep. In the silence we wrestle with all that is important to us and forget the most important part Jesus is in the boat with us. When God is silent we think we are alone facing the giant all by ourselves. We forget that one is standing by outside. We are not alone. Jesus is in the boat with us. What ever it is we are facing storms or giants Jesus is there with us. We are not alone. We don't have to fight alone. God does care, Jesus is with us.

And then the storm is calmed

in our hearts + minds + later we marvel at what God has done).

Even when we thought God was sleeping, God was at work. God surrounds us - people who care. Last year I was amazed - when I was facing death dead in the face + felt powerless + helpless - and found out how many prayer lists I was on + how many people had been praying for me. I heard from churches I had pastored in New England + Florida - friends in California + here. My boss. How comforting it was to discover how many people had been praying for me.

Even when we think God is asleep, God is working thru other people. The storms rage + we cry out - it's only later we discover God was at work when we thought God was asleep. Sometimes we experience something beautiful, something

So amazing, we can only call it a miracle. Other times we find what we really needed - strength for the journey, through the love, prayers, + support of family + friends. Sometimes God gives us a peaceful acceptance of a painful situation, sometimes the rage to continue fighting against all odds. But sooner or later we do discover that God does care. Out of the grueling experience, we come out more mature in the faith + we become like the fearful disciples. Mark tells us, (and they we filled - great awe + said to one another, who then is this, that even the wind + the waves obey him?"

The runner's most famous biographer Lance Armstrong, put it this way after he had come thru one of life's frightening storms "My cancer was the making of me. Thru fear + pain I become a more compassionate + intelligent man -

and therefore a more claive
one.

One night - a 9 yo named
Darrell Inay life went up in
smoke. A house fire killed
all of Darrell's family and left
him 2 severe burns over most
of his body. His medical
treatments were so painful
that little Darrell's screams
could be heard throughout
the burn ward. One day,
another patient called out
to a hospital volunteer. "How
can God do this to an innocent
child?"

Before the volunteer could
answer, Darrell shouted from
his hospital bed, "Don't say
any thing against God! When it
hurts, God cries 2 me."

Little children in the concentration
camps knew that & drew butterflies.
Elie Wiesel found that God was 2
him in the camp - & knew that
even when God was silent, God
was at work. That ~~is~~ is it..

God cares. Even when God is silent, God is at work. Even when Jesus seems to be asleep, we need to remember that Jesus is in the boat $\pm$ us, and Jesus can still the storms of life for us. God can give us the strength to fight the giants in our lives. The question is only where is your faith?

Paul says: in much endurance, among the things that press sore upon us, in the inescapable pains of life, in anxieties, amid stripes, in prisons, in tumults, in trials, in sleepless nights, in fastings, in purity, in knowledge, in the declaration of the truth, with the weapons of God on the right hand & the left, in ill report & in good report, as deceivers ^{yet} true, as unknown ^{yet} known, in dying — and lo! we live; as chastened but not killed; as grieved but always rejoicing; as poor but making many rich;

as having nothing but
possessing all things. Paul
in the face of good + bad
rejoiced always. Because he
knew that Jesus was in the boat
with him. Faith is not always
easy but it is possible.
Amen.

as having written this
proceeding on things. For
in the face of good & bad
things of which. Because the
human that goes into the boat
to him. For it is not enough
and it is in position.
Came.

A scripture for Gay Pride Month
2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27, 2 Corinthians 8:7-15
Mark 5:21-43

A woman gave a shabbily dressed stranger a \$20⁰⁰ bill and said "Don't despair." The next day, the man handed her a wad of money. "What's that for?" she asked. "He replied, 'That's the money you won. On the second race Don't Despair paid 7 to 1.'"

For those of us who despaired of America ever achieving equality, this week was one to give us hope. 6-3 the Supreme Court struck down the sodomy laws of 13 states, reversing Bowers v Hardwick of 17 years ago.

Today's Gospel is about Good News for those who have despaired of ever hearing good news and today's OT lesson is a scripture I have often used at gay men's holy unions. It is the male equivalent to me of the one I use in

women's holy unions from
the story of Ruth.

The scripture presents some
interesting characters - a scoundrel
who comes bearing news of a king
& his son's death, a very
important man telling Jesus
his daughter is about to die,
& a woman who was an
outcast who turned to Jesus as
her last resort.

The scoundrel comes to David
with the news that Saul & Jonathan
are dead. And David has him
killed - because he was the
man who admits he killed the
king. Saul was already dying
having attempted suicide; & the
man admits to finishing Saul off
at Saul's request. But regicide
was a heinous crime in those
and these - days. One does not
lay hands on the King. Can you
imagine the outcry if someone
were to attempt the life of
Q. Elizabeth, Philip or Prince
William?

It does not matter that ~~David~~
Saul was already dying —
and another part of scripture implies
that the man who put Saul out
of his misery actually had ~~intended~~
~~him~~ intended to kill him.

It was David's reaction to
Saul & Jonathan's death. The
remarkable incident reminds
us that David is now king —
the boy ^{who} once was a shepherd &
the king's military boy, and
probably the secret behind
Saul's jealousy was not only
David's military skills, but
an all too human jealousy
over who had the claims on
David's affections — father or
son. Is there a homo-erotic
overtone to this passage of
scripture? As much as the
fundamentalists deny it, the
story speaks for itself —

How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of battle.

Jonathan lies slain on the
high places

I am distressed for you my
brother Jonathan

Very pleasant you have been
to me
Your love to me was
wonderful,
passing the love of women.

It's very odd that the
that the committee who chose
these scriptures, chose that one
for the day when the major
gay pride parades are being
held all over America. Or
maybe, they too - understood
the homosexual overtones of
that scripture.

David despaired. Jairus despaired.
The unnamed woman - a
hemorrhage problem despaired.

Let's talk about the woman.
She has three strikes against her.
First, she's a woman in a
culture where most doors
are shut to her - women
were chattel, possessions, like
farm animals. Second, she
has been ritually unclean for

twelve years. She may not
touch anyone - husband, child,
friend - as they become
ritually unclean. Twelve years
without human touch. Totally
socially ~~but~~ isolated. Her
husband may not even sit
on her bed lest he be defiled.
She has no self-image left.
For her ^{as for us} self image is destiny,

And she is broke. She has spent
all of her money on medical
treatment. Today, she'd have a
hysterectomy & be cured in a
couple of hours. Then it was
a life sentence. It's rough when
medicine or surgery cannot
solve your problems. How can
I be healed? She can get it,
she believes if only she can
touch the one who has the
power to heal!

Can you imagine yourself
walking up & touching Jesus.
Can you imagine the power
that emanated from him.

It would be like touching a live electric wire. And like the story of the man killing Saul, it would be lese majesty. It just wasn't done.

Touch must have been very important to her. Touch has healing powers & is most important for those who feel untouchable. Humans require contact. Can you imagine living so you never touched another human being. Never felt a hand on your shoulder. Were denied physical intimacy.

Along side this need is another: our human need to be touched by God. Michaelangelo's God reaches out to touch Adam across the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It's the moment of creation. Creation & healing are very much alike. One brings ~~healing~~ ^{life} - the other new life. Fundamentally, ~~Each~~ Each depends on the touch of God.

Jesus asks "who touched me," the disciples can only think "In this crowd who knows." Probably they look on the woman's face gave her away. Today, we throw around the word "awesome" — but how powerful it must have been to have felt the touch of one who was truly awe-some.

Jesus says, "Your faith has made you whole." For Mark, Faith is the way people are drawn into the Kingdom. We don't need the faith that will move mountains, just the faith that makes us reach out a few inches. "If only I can touch the hem of his garment."

Faith is our openness to let God into our lives. I cannot guarantee physical healing — I can guarantee the healing of your soul. We must reach out — it's the contribution that we are asked to make.

When people open up + are touched by God - amazing things happen.

We change - the old self image is gone.

Karen Ann Edwards used to sing a song I love - In heaven's eyes there are no losers - in heaven's eyes there are no helpless causes.

For this woman there were important changes. She was no longer a loser - she was a whole human being. Secondly, she was part of a community. She was now part of a community when an important ^{God's} person called her "daughter". Third, she could now tell people "nothing is impossible" - she could reach out + touch others.

In Xian tradition - once you have experienced salvation you have the responsibility to reach out + touch someone else w/ your story + maybe they will make it their story.

Let's talk about Jairus. Powerful, important, ruler of the synagogues. The most important lay person in town. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet "come & touch my daughter that she may be made well & live."

This was an important man who is asking something of a mere carpenter and itinerant preacher. Most men wouldn't have bothered. Most men won't even ask for directions, much less help; even when their hopelessly lost. They have too much pride. ~~Scripture says~~ Someone once said the reason Moses wandered in the desert 40 years is because he wouldn't let Miriam see the map. Scripture says, you have not because you ask not.

Most who lived at the time of Jesus didn't understand his greatness. Jairus did. Maybe he was so desperate he was willing to take a chance on anyone who offered hope.

Jesus responded to ~~his~~ ^{this} request.
Jesus always responds to our
requests. A mature faith tells
us that Jesus does not always
respond to our requests in the
way we hoped — but Jesus always
responds.

Jimmy Carter once said, "God
answers our prayers. Sometimes
the answer is yes. Sometimes
the answer is no. Sometimes
the answer is, you've got to
be kidding."

Jairus asked, the woman ~~to~~
demanded — ~~they both were~~
~~touch~~ & Jairus daughter was
touched & made alive — the
woman was touched & given
new life

~~they will make it their story.~~

In this story the divine + the human touch. Love from one person touches another + ~~she~~^{they} is healed. Love from God touches another + ~~she~~^{they} is changed.

Despair? Gone! David despaired over the ~~loss~~^{death} of Jonathan and went on to be the ancestor of Jesus. Jairus despaired over his daughter's life and Jesus asked someone to bring her breakfast. The woman despaired of ever being healed + was changed forever.

Where are you hurting + broken? Where do you need healing in your life. For most of us it's time to reach out + touch

Christ's garment as he passes by. Christ will know it if we do - the change will be impressive. Don't despair. Reach out + touch.

Amen.

When I am weak, then I am strong

Lincoln once said "God must have loved the common man, he made so many of them." But nobody wants to be thought of as common - in the sense of ordinary - and certainly nobody wants to be thought of as common - in the sense of tacky.

What we really want to be is ~~the~~ like story teller Harrison Keillor's fictional town of Lake Wobegon "where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, & all the children are above average."

Today's scripture is about some above-average people - certainly beyond anything you & I can hope for - David, Jesus & Paul.

In the second chapter of 2 Samuel David had been anointed king by the leaders of Judah - now we read how David is going to be anointed by the leaders of the tribes of Israel, so that David

became the king of a united Israel & Judah. In the 10th verse it says "David became greater & greater. Once the 8th child in a family (which is an ironic touch because in Hebrew 7 is the number of completion), the youngest & least impressive, now he is the greatest of biblical kings.

But like all lives, David's life had it's ups & downs. So certainly did Paul's, so did Jesus - so if these three great figures had lives that weren't smooth what do we expect.

David had ~~slain~~ ^{defeated} the giant & just five smooth stones, and bring about a great victory. But in a short time, Saul would turn on David and David would have to flee for his life. It reminds us that simply because God is leading, not everything will go smoothly. It's easy to see the hand of God when everything is going well, but difficult

times - times that cause us pain -
make us wonder where God
is.

David became "greater & greater"
because the God of Hosts was $\bar{c}$
him - God is always $\bar{c}$ ~~us~~ us -
we know that. Do we? Up until
this point David has followed
where God was leading, but
we all know that there will
come a time when David will
choose to follow his own way
rather than listening to God.
God had asked David to be
the Shepherd of Israel - but a
time would come when David
would allow his own desires
to lead him, leading to the
disasters in his life.

Many years ago, when I was at
Boston, I had occasion, as the
HCC pastor to meet $\bar{c}$ the men
of NAMBLA. The North American
Man-Boy Love association. I
listened as these men talked
about loving the boys they were
supposed to be leading. There

were three clergymen at that meeting - the catholic priest Paul Shanley, a Unitarian minister and a UCC minister. I was appalled - even in the ^{sexually} open days of the 70's - at the rationalizations they offered. Almost all of them gave money + gifts to adolescent boys in exchange for sex. As the mother of teenage boys I would not have allowed one of them alone in a room w/ a young boy. They were using positions of power + influence over young people's lives to satisfy their own desires. One of the challenges of the closet is the inappropriateness of our sexual choices. Kids are not an acceptable choice. These men had a problem + weren't willing to deal w/ it. The closet not only comes w/ a wine cellar - it also comes with some present + unacceptable dangers.

It was as easy ~~to~~ to make inappropriate choices in Boston as it was in Biblical ~~Hebrew~~ Jerusalem. Paul Shanley showed

Have read his Bible more carefully.

David had some bad times — so did Jesus. Jesus went back to his home town as a guest preacher. This was the first time he had gone home as a rabbi. It's like graduating from seminary + being invited to preach at your home church, when every body remembers you as a kid + all the trouble you got into. All these people were amazed that this was "Mary's son" — a slur on his parentage. He's nobody + look at what happens around him. He thinks he's so smart — he's nothing but a carpenter. A rather above-average carpenter. But they would not believe him — and scripture says "he could do no mighty works there." You cannot be helped if you refuse to be helped.

Before W.W. II England's Prime Minister was Neville Chamberlain — who felt we needed to get along w Hitler and avoid war.

of course, Hitler walked into Austria, Poland & Czechoslovakia and W.W. II broke out. Chamberlain was so broken by it that he just gave up on life. A famous writer was talking to his doctor & asked why Chamberlain died at such a young age. His doctor's answer was "Chamberlain did not want to live and when someone says that, no doctor can save him."

Jesus still cannot help those who believe they do not need him.

It's funny - preaching is a strange business. You can preach well only if people are willing to listen to you. And surroundings count. I once preached in a grey - really quite dark grey - room and it was hard to fight that room. It was very depressing and difficult to get the energy needed to preach well. The same thing in congregations. The congregation preaches half the sermon. Its

receptiveness is very important.
It's very difficult to preach to a
hostile crowd.

Even Jesus, powerful as he was,
ran into situations where people
did not want to hear his message.

And then there was Paul. Paul
had a vision of X on the Damascus
road. He'd had other visions in
a time when people boasted of
their ability to see & interpret
visions. Paul down plays his.

"To keep me from becoming
conceited because of these
revelations, I was given a thorn
in the flesh - a messenger from
Satan to torment me. Three
times I pleaded $\bar{c}$ God to take
it away from me. But God
said to me "My grace is
sufficient for you, for my
power is made perfect in
weakness" therefore I will
boast all the more gladly
about my weakness, so that

Christ's power may rest on me.
That is why I delight in weaknesses,
in hardships, in insults, in
persecutions, in difficulties -
for when I am weak - then I
am strong !!!

Someone once said that Paul's
problem started with him
having malaria + having the
fevers, headaches + body aches
that went w/ it. Some think it
was because he was nearly
blind - which could have come
from the malaria. But he
delighted in having the thorn -
Barclay translates it "Stake"
in his flesh because it caused
him to rely solely on God. He
wasn't strong enough by himself
to do what he needed to do.

Have you ever asked to have
your homosexuality taken away.
We all have at some time
when things were tough. But
God said no - work w/ what you've
got. When I am ^{weak} ~~weak~~ then I
am strong.

Why? What do we get out of it.

1. Suffering destroys our illusions. David was under the illusion that the primary purpose in his life was the pursuit of his own happiness. Life is all about ME, my desires, my agenda. Then something happens + reality intrudes. A diagnosis, death, disruption, a broken relationship, a lost job. And our perfect world disintegrates and we wonder where to turn. It's a beautiful world but it's not all about it being perfect. A self-centered life is small + miserable. What the world sees as success is not always fulfilling. Suffering diminishes our illusions + points us in the direction of true peace + fulfillment.

2. Suffering destroys our sense of being happy. When all is going well + we're on top of the world. Sometimes the last thing we think of is God. But happiness is fleeting. What happens when your team doesn't win.

when you're passed over for a promotion, when your partner says "we have to talk" - does happiness fly out the window? Sometimes it does. Some people have discovered that when happiness is gone, joy + peace, which have been there all along, emerge - but they have been masked by a desperate search for happiness.

Bonhoeffer said "I think that God is nearer suffering than to happiness and to find God in this way gives peace + rest + a strong + courageous heart." Happiness doesn't need God. Joy does.

3. Suffering makes us desperate - because that's when we turn to God. When we are at our weakest, completely broken + overwhelmed by our situation we finally give up + let God. Paul says "5 times I pleaded w/ God to take it away"

And God answered: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power

is made perfect in weakness." God does not promise to take away the thorn. All God says is "My grace is sufficient" Paul would never be undone by his thorn, never overwhelmed by it - God's grace was sufficient.

The apostle Paul was surrounded by threats, persecution + suffering. How did he endure it. He discovered that grace was sufficient. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

In our weakness, let's turn to God + let God do what God can do best. For when we are weak, then we are strong! we have the strength of God.
~~amen.~~

Three above-average people - more than us - all of whom had problems. David messed up, Jesus couldn't get it off, Paul had a thorn - But Paul's answer for it all "My grace is sufficient" - When I am weak, then God is strong." amen

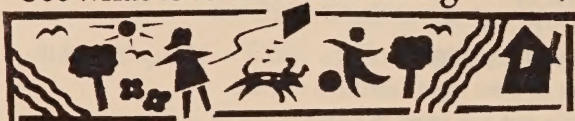
is made perfect in weakness. God
does not promise to take away
the thorn. God says in
"My grace is sufficient" that
we need never be under its
weight, never overwhelmed by it -
that's grace was sufficient.

The apostle Paul was persecuted
by Jews, persecutors & suffering.
He did it because it was necessary.
His grace was sufficient. For
when I am weak, then I am
strong."

Our encouragement, let turn to
that for the the what God can
do here. For when we are weak,
then we are strong: our power
the strength of God.

There are - average people - there
there are - see of culture and problems.
Paul's message, Jesus' teaching - Paul's
in fact, Paul has a thorn - Paul's
answer for us are "My grace is
sufficient" when I am weak,
then God is strong."

"See what love the Father has given us,



that we should be called children of God."

1 John 3:1

BETHEL

8406 Fourth Avenue North

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833-6328

BETHEL

"Surely this is the house of God!"

Third Sunday of Easter

May 4, 2003

Morning Worship, 11:30 a.m.

***The Congregation will please stand**

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INVOCATION

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Nancy Underhill

ONE: Let us offer right sacrifices to God.

MANY: We put our trust in God.

ONE: In peace we lie down and sleep;

MANY: In God alone we rise up in safety.

HYMN: *I Will Sing of My Redeemer*

OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Our Prayer Offerings

Together, let us pray for:

the people of this congregation
those who suffer and those in trouble
the concerns of our community
the world, its peoples, and its leaders
the church universal -- its leaders, its members,
and its mission

Our Tithes and Gifts

*THE DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God all creatures here below.

Praise God above ye heavenly host,

Praise Maker, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

READINGS FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Acts 3: 12-19

I John 3: 1-17

Luke 24: 36B-48

HYMN: *Oh, How He Loves You and Me*

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON

Rev. Marge Ragona

Walking through Walls

COMMUNION HYMN *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*

THE COLLECT CALL TO CONFESSION

God, you have called us to righteous anger, but without committing sin. Jesus came without sin, to take away our sin, but we still break your laws. When we live outside your law, we break communion with you. Forgive us our waywardness, and bring us anew to be your people, so that we might do righteousness in your sight. Hear now our silent confessions...

CHRIST'S PRAYER "Our Creator, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND PARDON: God has mercy on us, forgives us, and grants us true humility of heart, mind, and spirit; that we may walk in the ways of Jesus, and trust in God's holy Word. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Celebrant:	God be with you.
People:	And also with you.
Celebrant:	Lift up your hearts.
People:	We lift them up to God.
Celebrant:	Let us give thanks to God.
People:	It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Celebrant: It is right to give you thanks and praise for you alone are God, living and true. And now with all angels and archangels, let us declare God's praise.

SANCTUS: (Together) Holy, holy, holy, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is Christ who comes in the name of our God. Hosanna in the highest.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Words of Institution

Prayer of Consecration

THE MYSTERY OF OUR FAITH

Christ has died.

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

SHARING OF THE SACRAMENT

Note: Communion is served at the altar with grape juice; you may come alone, with a friend, or with someone significant in your life.

COMMUNION MUSIC

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

***THE HYMN OF CONSECRATION**

Blessed Assurance

***OUR COMMUNITY CIRCLE**

***BENEDICTION**

***THE PASSING OF THE PEACE**

*The vigil candle on the altar is our "justice candle"
It will burn until all people are free and equal.*

We welcome you to our worshipping community. where in the ancient tradition of the church, we worship in a home. We pray that you will receive a blessing by worshipping with us. If you are new, please fill out a registration card and let us know if you want to be on our mailing list. Again, welcome and know that you are a blessing to us. We hope to be a blessing to you.

I WILL SING OF MY REDEEMER

I will sing of my Redeemer, and his wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross he suffered, from the debt to set me free.

**Sing, O sing of my Redeemer,
With his blood he purchased me,
On the cross he sealed my pardon,
Paid the debt and made me free.**

I will sing of my Redeemer and his heavenly love to me.
He from death to life has bro't me,
Child of God with him to be.

O HOW HE LOVES YOU AND ME

O how he loves you and me,
O how he loves you and me:
He gave his life, what more could he give;
O how he loves you, O how he loves me,
O how he loves you and me.

Jesus to Calvary did go,
His love for people to show;
What he did there, brought hope from despair:
O how he loves you, O how he loves me,
O how he loves you and me.

**We are moving to
1830-B Montclair Road**

**We need help after church,
Sunday, May 17th.**

**Help us set up for our first
Sunday in our new home
Sunday, May 24**

TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the savior,
And life more abundant and free!

**Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.**

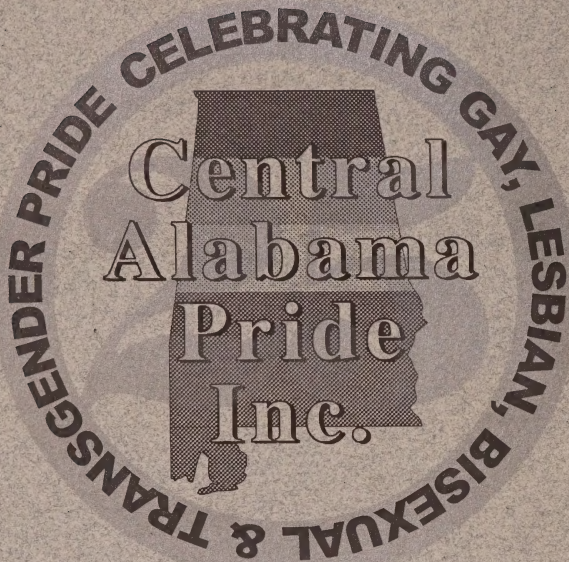
The Word will not fail you, he promised;
Believe that and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!

BLESSED ASSURANCE

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of his spirit, washed in his blood.

**This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my savior, all the day long.**

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.



MAY 30 - JUNE 8, 2003

PRIDE

PARTNERS

2003

25 Proud Years

Birmingham's first organized Pride celebration, was held June 24, 1979. This 'Day in the Park' has been held annually ever since under the leadership of several different organizations. 2003 will mark the 25th Anniversary of Pride in Birmingham.

Over the years, many other events have been added to the 'Day in the Park', some have endured and some have not.

In 1989, a parade was added to the annual festivities. In 2000, the parade was moved from a Sunday Afternoon Parade to a Saturday Night Mardi Gras Style Parade in the tradition of the World's Largest GLBT Celebration, Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras and is rapidly growing in popularity.

In 1991, the first Miss Gay Pride pageant was held with the legendary Zee Jones capturing the title. Over the years the titles of Mr., Ms. and Ms-Her have been added and these title holders have represented us well in the community.

In 2000, the first attempt was made to expand Pride to a 10 day celebration covering two weekends with Title Pageants the first weekend, varied events throughout the week, and the Day in the Park on Sunday of the second weekend. In 2001, a Town Hall Meeting was added and is now an integral part of Pride activities.

Pride in Birmingham has always been community driven. Without your financial support and input of ideas, the organizations that have produced Pride over the years could not have kept it going. Please help to continue the tradition by becoming a Silver Anniversary Pride Partner.

WHY DO WE NEED A PRIDE CELEBRATION?

- ▼ To honor those who have sacrificed to get us where we are today
- ▼ To build identity as a community
- ▼ To help our youth grow up proud
- ▼ To create positive images of who we are to the community at large
- ▼ To learn about available resources
- ▼ To celebrate our individual and group accomplishments
- ▼ To increase our visibility to politicians
- ▼ To combat both external and internal homophobia

WHAT YOUR PARTNERSHIP PROVIDES

Your commitment as a Pride Partner helps greatly in producing a quality event. These tax-deductible contributions allow us to go ahead and book talent and reserve venues. With your support, Pride will continue to offer quality celebration events at little to no cost to the public.

Central Alabama Pride, Inc. is a proud member of

InterPride

The International Association of LGBT Pride Organizers

www.interpride.org

Company/Individual Name _____ **Home Phone** _____

Contact _____ **Work Phone** _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ **Email** _____

Name for Use in Program _____

(Note: if you do not wish your name to appear in the program, use 'A Friend')

Please Indicate Level of Partnership _____ **Check Enclosed ?** **Yes** **No**

I will submit my payment in full by the following date _____

Detach this and mail it to Central Alabama Pride, P.O. Box 130387, Birmingham, Alabama, 35213-0387

Deadline for inclusion in media is April 1st.

SILVER ANNIVERSARY PARTNERSHIP LEVELS

RAINBOW PARTNER \$2,500 and up

- ▽ Prominent Name and Logo Visibility on Pride Materials
- ▽ Ad in Official 2003 Pride Program
- ▽ Complimentary 10' x 30' Festival Booth Space
- ▽ Complimentary Parade Registration
- ▽ Main Stage Sponsorship Announcements
- ▽ Included in Event and Program Sponsor Listing

RED PARTNER \$1,000 to \$2,499

- ▽ Name and Logo on Pride Materials
- ▽ Ad in Official 2003 Pride Program
- ▽ Complimentary 10' x 30' Festival Booth Space
- ▽ Complimentary Parade Registration
- ▽ Main Stage Sponsorship Announcements
- ▽ Included in Event and Program Sponsor Listing

ORANGE PARTNER \$500 to \$999

- ▽ Ad in the Official Pride 2003 Pride Program
- ▽ Complimentary 10' x 20' Festival Booth Space
- ▽ Complimentary Parade Registration
- ▽ Main Stage Sponsorship Announcements
- ▽ Included in Event and Program Sponsor Listing

YELLOW PARTNER \$250 to \$499

- ▽ Ad in the Official Pride 2003 Pride Program
- ▽ Complimentary 10' x 10' Festival Booth Space
- ▽ Complimentary Parade Registration
- ▽ Main Stage Sponsorship Announcements
- ▽ Included in Event and Program Sponsor Listing

GREEN PARTNER \$100 to \$249

- ▽ Ad in the Official 2003 Pride Program
- ▽ Main Stage Sponsorship Announcements
- ▽ Included on Event/Program Sponsor Display

BLUE PARTNER \$50 to \$99

- ▽ Friendship/Memorial Message in the 2003 Pride Program
- ▽ Sponsorship Announcements from Main Stage
- ▽ Listing in Sponsor Display at Events and in Program

PURPLE PARTNER \$25 to \$49

- ▽ Listing in Sponsor Display at Events and in Program

25 YEARS OF PRIDE IN BIRMINGHAM

May 30 - June 8, 2003

FRIDAY, MAY 30

InterFaith Service

Coordinated by Rev. Elaine Blanchard, Pilgrim
Congregational Church, UCC

SATURDAY, MAY 31

**Community Service Project
Pride Pageants**

SUNDAY, JUNE 1

T.B.A.

MONDAY, JUNE 2

T.B.A.

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

Margaret Cho *

Alabama Theatre - 8 p.m.

Tickets \$15-\$35 — VIP Ticket w/AfterParty \$75

****tentative depending on pre- sale of tickets...
call 205-595-5308 for pre sale info*

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

T.B.A.

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

Roller Disco Party

Skates 280

FRIDAY, JUNE 6

Town Hall Forum

Topics and Speakers To Be Announced

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

15th Annual Pride Parade

Mardi Gras Style

Through Five Points South, Down 20th Street
Dance Party Following

SUNDAY, JUNE 8

25th Annual "Day in the Park"

Entertainment, Informational Booths,
Pride Merchandise, Fun for the Whole Family

Events, times and locations subject to change

